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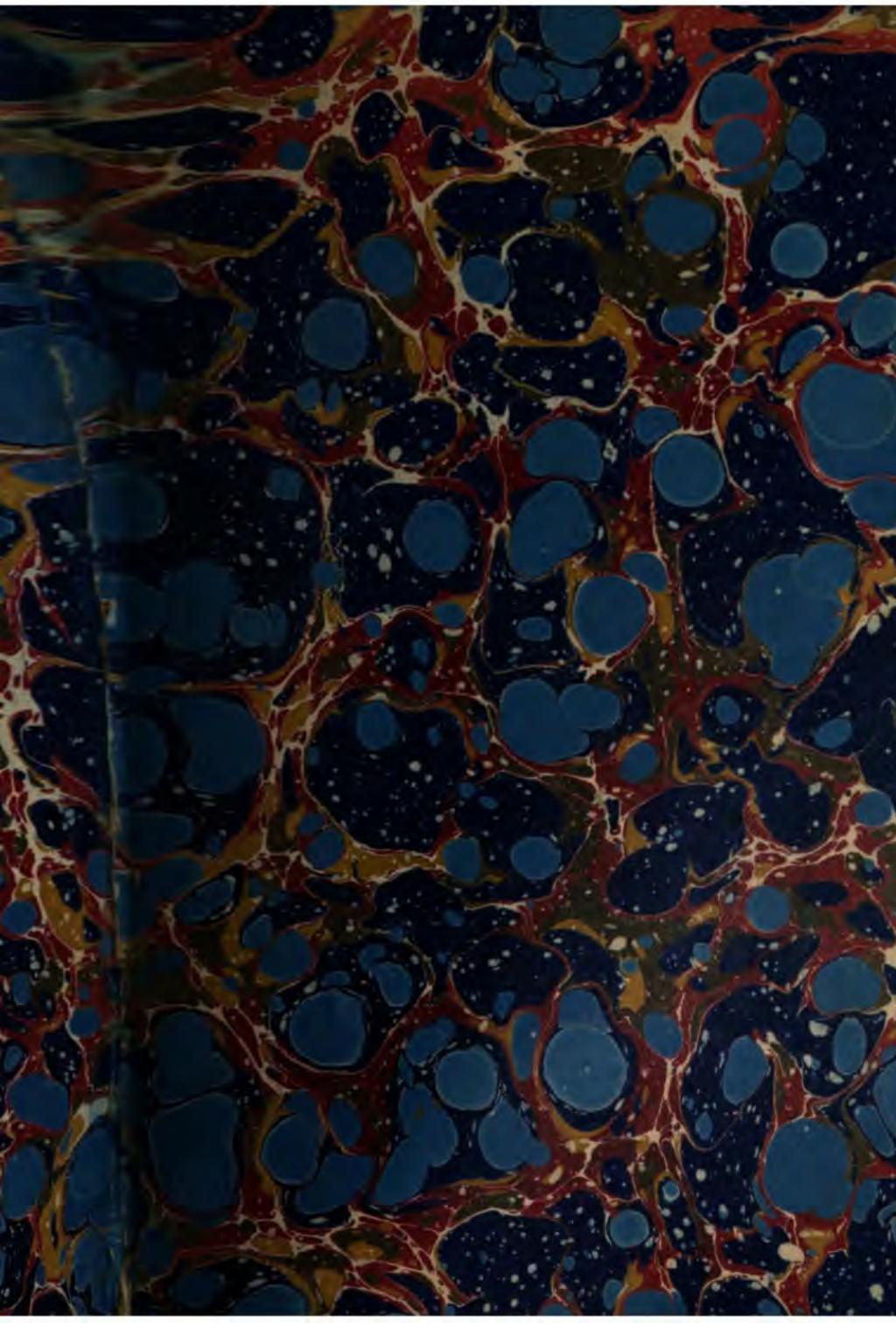
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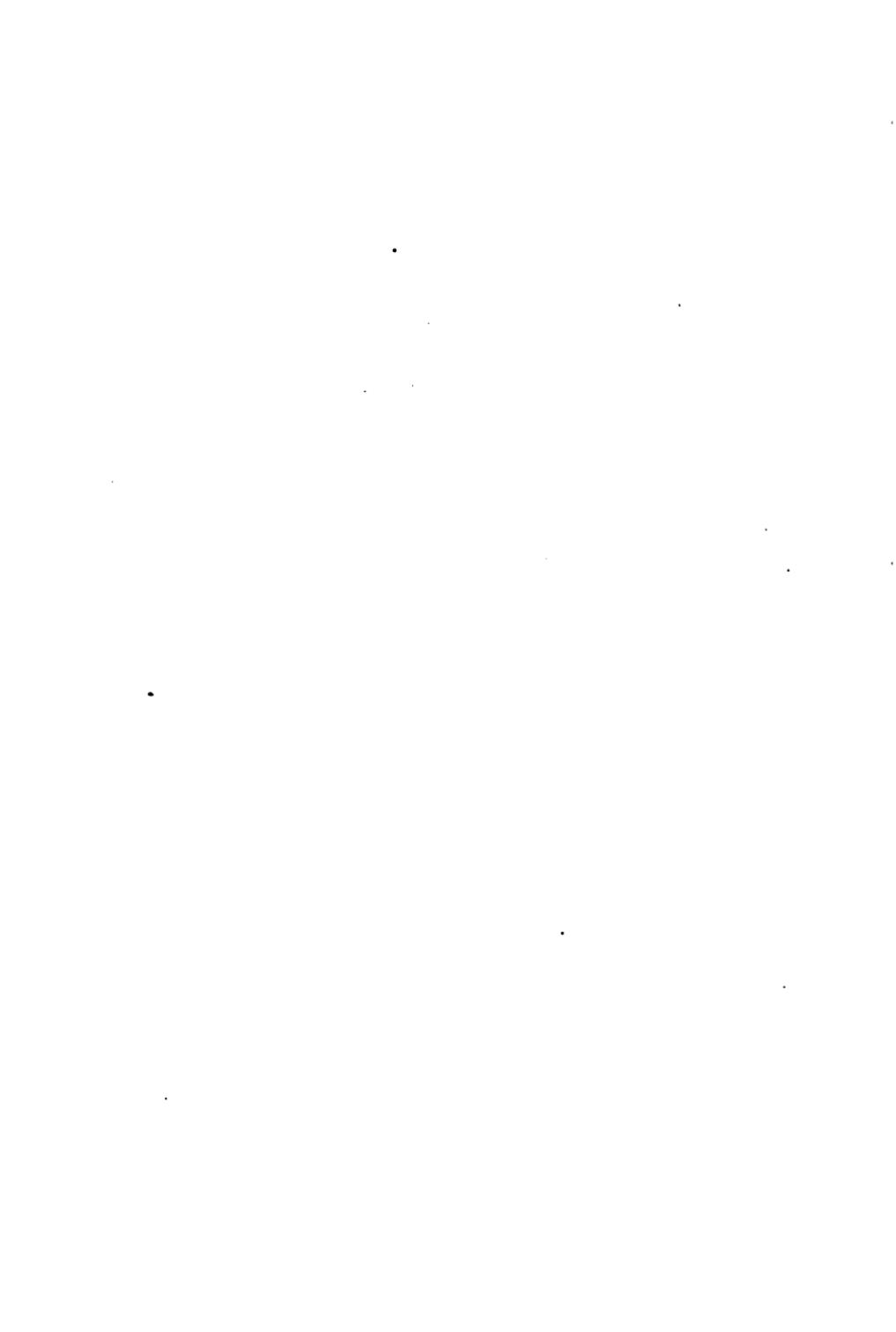
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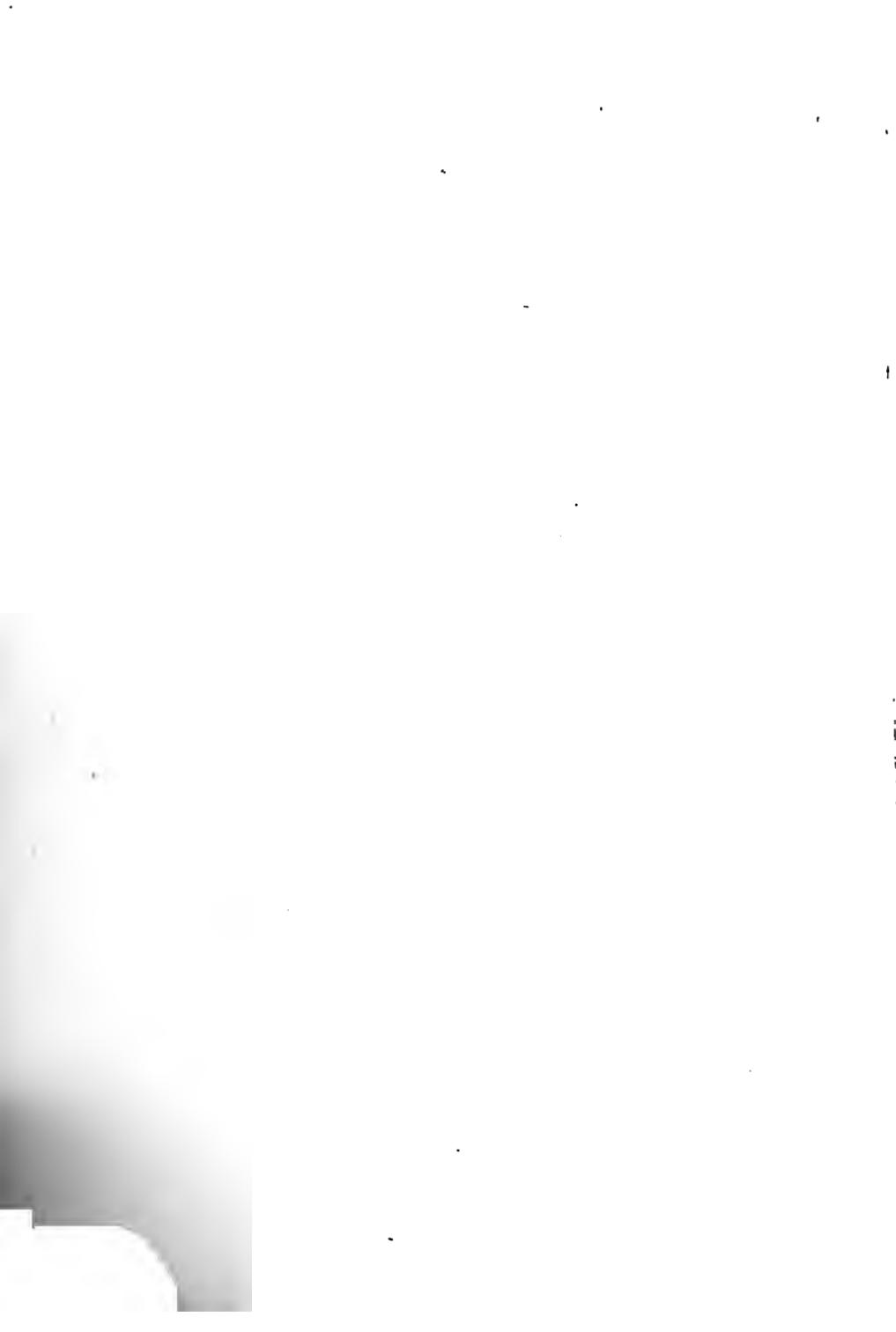
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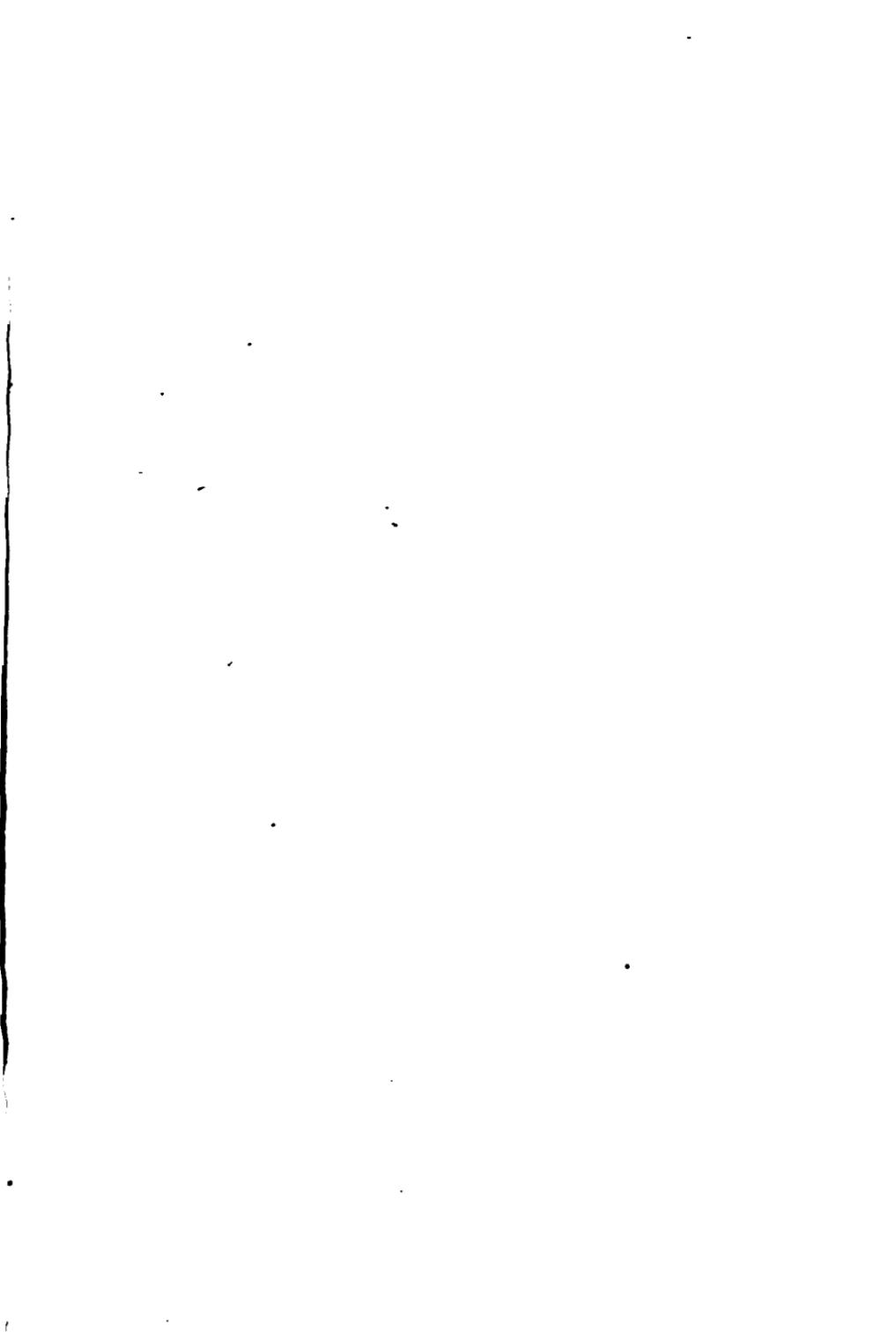


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IN THE PLAYING FIELDS.

Frontispiece.

Illustration by H. H. Hill

From *Walters' Stories for Children*.

RECOLLECTIONS OF ETON.

BY AN ETONIAN.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY SYDNEY P. HALL.

“Be it a weakness it deserves some praise,
We love the play-place of our early days.”



LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1870.

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Sept. 11, 1919

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS.
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF ETON.

CHAPTER I. HOME LESSONS.

“ He gives the local bias all its sway,
Resolves that where he played his sons shall play,
And destines their bright genius to be shown
Just in the place where he displayed his own.”

Conquer.

“ **W**ELL, you will find a good many strange things at Eton,” said my father. “ Won’t he, Jim ?”

Jim was my elder brother, who had already been at Eton and had left it, and who was therefore naturally looked up to as a high authority on school life.

“ There’ll be a good many new things ; eh, Jim ?” said my father.

“ Why, yes ; of course there will, that’s natural. But it’s a great thing to take everything quietly, and not be astonished at anything.”

“ You pass as a wise man then, and you get rid of a great many questions which might be puzzling.”

“ And then there’s another thing, Charley,” continued Jim. “ Don’t be fool enough to think yourself insulted when they ask your name. It’s the same with every-

body when they first go, and you'll be no worse off than any one else."

"That's true," said my father. "But you mustn't give the name we call you here. Home names are not recognized, and Norton is the only answer for you. And—"

"But I know all that," said I, interrupting him. "You learn that much at a private school." For I was indignant at the supposition that I did not know even that.

"Well, I suppose you do; but still it does no harm repeating it; does it, Jim?"

"No, it certainly does no harm," answered Jim. "But I suppose, as Charley says, he learns all that sort of thing at a private school. I know I did when I was at one; and after all, you find that everybody who has been at school anywhere gets on well enough at Eton."

"I believe they do; if they did not, you would never find that everybody looks back with such pleasure as they do to their old Eton days. For my part, I am sure the happiest part of my life was passed there; and there is no reason to expect that Charley will find it otherwise, if he only keeps out of scrapes, avoids debt, and is sufficiently industrious to keep in favour with his tutor. But it is getting late, and as we have something before us to-morrow, I think we had all better be off to bed."

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCTIONS—MY DAME AND MY TUTOR.

“ Ye distant spires, ye antique towers,
That crown the watery glade ;
Where grateful science still adores,
Her Henry’s holy shade.”

Gray.

NEXT morning we were off by an early train, and after a somewhat tedious journey arrived at the Windsor Station. Nothing particular seemed to be going on, nor were there many other arrivals beside ourselves. The multitude of boys who occasionally used to be seen pouring out of the trains, had been here two days before, but now no traces of them were to be seen. For the rules of the school are not to be broken through without some urgent reason, and the day, therefore, that is once fixed for the return after the holidays, must not be changed or delayed to suit the convenience of each parent, as it might be in a private school ; but every boy has to present himself on the appointed day, or incur penalties in proportion to the weakness of his excuses. A new boy, however, as not yet being a member of the school, is not considered bound by these regulations ; and therefore, though it had been determined that no delay should take place before my entry on this new form of life, still there was

an allowance of two days made for me, in order that I might not find myself alone and a stranger in the midst of the tumult of a first night.

“Now,” said my father, as we got out of the train, “we must get into a fly, and drive down to Eton.”

We did so, and on our way I beheld for the first time the broad river which has done so much, both morally and physically, for all Etonians. There it lay, as we crossed over the bridge that forms the communication between Eton and Windsor, and there, close under the bridge, were the rafts and boat-houses—called into existence and supported by that love for aquatic pursuits which has been the characteristic of endless generations.

“Now we are in Eton,” said my father, as we left the bridge behind us. “This long narrow street contains the whole town, and leads straight to the College. There is the chapel, and here,” he added, as the carriage drew up, “we are at our journey’s end.”

The bell was rung, and presently the door was opened by a fat and by no means aristocratic-looking servant, who filled the responsible post of butler in the establishment.

“Is Mr. Argles at home?”

“Yes, sir; would you walk in?” And presently we were shown into a drawing-room, evidently left empty for our reception.

“What sort of looking man is Mr. Argles?” said I, as soon as we were left alone; for though I had often heard about him before, still I was perpetually trying to picture to myself the reality, and not succeeding.

“Well,” answered my father, “he is not a bad-looking man; and though he does keep a dame’s house, and is a

dame himself. still he is as tall and as broad as most men are. He is a good-natured, easy man, and I am sure you will like him."

"Perhaps," said I ; and at this moment Mr. Argles walked in.

For the information of those of my readers who may be non-Etonians, I may as well solve in the outset what is always to them a very puzzling question—wherein lies the difference between a dame's and a tutor's house, and how it is that these so-called dames are often men. It is not difficult to comprehend what a tutor's house is. It is one kept by any of the assistant masters in the regular school work, and where he receives boarders, who are under his especial care, both as to maintenance and tuition. The dames may be considered to be any who are not tutors. They receive boarders also, but have nothing to say to their tuition ; and if, therefore, a parent determine to send his boys to a dame's house, he must also fix upon a tutor for him, as the dames will not take upon themselves to regulate anything of this sort. There are ladies who keep houses at Eton, and these are strictly dames ; but there are also men, as, for example, the drawing-master, and these, from not being on the list of regular assistant masters, do not come under the class of tutors. Were even the mathematical masters to have regularly-organized houses, it is doubtful whether they also would not be considered dames.

Mr. Argles, who had just presented himself, was one of this apparently contradictory species. After welcoming us both, and saying what he had probably said to a hundred visitors of the same sort, he proposed that we should go and see the room which was destined for me.

"We cannot give all our boys single rooms," he said, "so the younger ones are always put two together ; and then as they rise in the house, and as vacancies occur, they get promoted to an independent room. This is your room," he added, turning to me as he opened one of the passage doors.

"Upon my word, you are uncommonly well off, Charley," said my father. "It is a charming room ; so cheerful, too, looking on to the street."

"Yes," said Mr. Argles, "and there is always something going on, what with the going in and coming out of school ; so that even if a boy be confined to his room by illness, he need never feel dull or solitary."

"Who is the companion who is to be with him ?" asked my father.

"His name is Martin. He is a nice fellow, and has already been here two halves, so he will be able to put your boy up to the ways of the school. But I hope you will see him yourself before you go away. He will probably be in soon."

"Well, I hope we may ; perhaps later in the afternoon. Now don't you think we ought to pay a visit to Mr. Turner, who is to be his tutor ?"

"Yes. I suppose you ought," said Mr. Argles, "and then he will probably send you on to the head master, who is generally known as 'the Doctor' ; and after you have settled matters with both of them, your time will be nearly up, if you are to get back to town by dinner-time."

We accordingly left the room in which we had been talking, and proceeded down-stairs. Just as we got into the hall, one of the side doors was opened and a lady appeared.

"Oh, I must introduce you to Mrs. Seely," said Mr. Argles to me. "Your father already knows her, as he has been here before." And with this he led me up to the lady in question, from whom, however, we soon took our leave after an interchange of civil speeches.

At last we were in the street, and I began to think of what I had already seen, and of what I was going to. First there was the room which I was to inhabit ; small certainly, but cheerful, as they had said, and which was capable of improvement by means of the prints which I had brought with me for its walls. Then there was my dame himself, Mr. Argles, and his sub-dame, Mrs. Seely; and both of these I was prepared to like. All that Mr. Argles had said, had been spoken in a pleasant open manner, and with a smile almost perpetually on his face. Then too there was something in his appearance which prepossessed me in his favour ; perhaps it was because he was so different from the private school authorities whom I had been accustomed to. With him there was none of that constrained seriousness, and that gravity of manner as well as of dress, which is so often found among preparatory teachers, and which seems as if they had adopted a chronic melancholy as one of the conditions of earning money. On the contrary, my dame was as cheerful as possible, and entirely free from the slightest appearance of a pedagogue. Tall and stout, with a full colour in his cheeks, and dressed in one of those light summer suits which are popularly denominated "dittos," he looked more like a country gentleman remote from all observation, than the owner of a house in the populous little world of Eton, and invested with authority over no less than forty-seven of the members of that world. On

the whole therefore I was pleased with the house and its owner, and if I had not had the opportunity of seeing much of Mrs. Seely, still by her face I could augur favourably of her.

"You know who Mrs. Seely is," said my father, as we walked along. "She acts as a sort of general manager in the house, and looks after the boys in their rooms, sees the candles are put out at night, brings round the daily allowance of tea in the morning, and pills at night for those who want them. In every house there is one of these ladies, but generally it is the wife of the master that acts in this way. But if he is unmarried, like Mr. Argles, there must be some one instead. Mrs. Turner manages it all for your tutor."

The house we were going to was not far off, and we were soon admitted into the study, where Mr. Turner received us. He was a man who might have been considered tall, had there not been a permanent stoop about his head and shoulders, contracted no doubt from constantly leaning over his desk. Dressed as any gentleman might be, and with a serious but withal undemonstrative face, it might have puzzled an observer to have hazarded even a conjecture as to what his disposition was. But as soon as he spoke, and especially when he smiled, a life seemed to come into the eyes, while the expression of his mouth showed that there was a good-nature and kindness about him which promised well for future intercourse. He spoke to my father with reference to my school life, but not much to myself; yet though I felt that he treated me more as a child, and not with the good-natured ease which I had met with in Mr. Argles, still the good opinion which I had formed of him at first

did not diminish, only perhaps it was mingled with a certain feeling of reverence.

“The new boys were all examined together on Saturday,” he said, in answer to my father’s inquiry as to what examination I should have to go through. “Their places are therefore settled; but your boy had better come to me here to-morrow, and I can find out what he knows privately. Suppose he comes here at half-past seven to-morrow morning.”

“Very well—you hear that, Charley; here, at half-past seven to-morrow.”

“Yes,” said my tutor, “and rather before the time than after; for I go in to school myself at the half hour, and should wish to see you settled to your work before I leave.”

“Oh, he will be here,” said my father. “And now ought we not to go on to the Doctor’s?”

“Yes, you must go there, and your son will have to write his name in a book, which is equivalent to entering him as a member of the school. That is all you will have to do.”

“Thank you very much,” said my father. “And now, Charley, we must not keep Mr. Turner any longer.” And so we took leave.

The houses in Eton cluster so closely together about the College, that no one of them can be said to be very far from the other. It did not take us long therefore to reach the Doctor’s. He was at home, and would be with us in a moment, so the servant said; and to my astonishment, a figure soon appeared dressed in a black gown, such as I had never seen before except in a pulpit, and proceeded to shake hands with us. Our business was

soon over, being nothing more, as my tutor had said, but the inscription of my name in a large book, and the payment of five pounds ; and we returned as quickly as possible to my dame's, both of us gratified by the thought that I was now really an Eton boy.

Mr. Argles was not at home this time, but that we were neither of us sorry for, and went up at once again to examine my room. It was now tenanted by a boy who may have been a year older than myself, with black hair, and tolerably well looking in countenance, and who in answer to my father's inquiries declared that his name was Martin.

“Very well, then, this is your new companion. His name is Norton. You mustn't bully him too much as a new boy.”

“No,” said Martin, laughing.

“I think the walls,” continued my father, “might be improved by a picture or two, or you might like a few flowers in the window, so I shall leave each of you something to go towards any improvement you may make.” And with that he produced a couple of half-sovereigns, which neither of us were slow to accept.

There may have been more remarks after this ; there probably were ; but I cannot say I recollect them. All I recollect is that Martin soon afterwards left us ; and whether the cause of his departure were the sordid desire of spending his ten shillings, or the more delicate motive of not wishing to embarrass our leave-takings, matters little. It was sufficient for us that we were relieved of his presence, and that as the time for parting approached, we were left in quiet to say any last words that might suggest themselves. Punctual to its time the fly came to

the door, one last good-bye, and then I was left alone on the pavement, watching the retreating carriage up the road. Soon the corner was turned, and I went up to my room, feeling that I was solitary and unknown in the midst of the multitude about me.

CHAPTER III.

I AM PLACED—MESSES.

“When a boy first goes to school he meets with many masters as well as many friends.”—*Liber Veritatis.*

THE first evening passed off more easily than I had expected. Martin soon made his reappearance, and proceeded to inspect the various items of luggage I had brought with me.

“What’s that?” he asked, pointing to a hamper in one corner. “That’s sock, I suppose.”

“What?”

“Don’t you know what sock is? Hams, jams, etc.; meats and sweets, such as everybody brings from home.”

“Oh no, it is not that,” said I. “There are only some cups and saucers, a coffee-pot, and things of that sort in it.”

“Why, all those are useless, for they give you cups and other things here. You’d much better have brought something that you didn’t get. And what’s that?” he continued, pointing to a square deal box.

“There are some pictures in that which I meant to put up on the wall; I should think there would be room for them.”

“Room? Yes, I should think so. We’ll do all that to-morrow.”

"After I come from my tutor's?" I suggested.

"Yes, if you are going to him. But who is he, and what does he want you for?"

"He is Mr. Turner, and he wants me at half-past seven, to examine me before I am placed."

"Well, you needn't always call him 'Mister' when you speak of him; it's quite enough to do that to his face. People don't care for titles of any sort at Eton. And so you are going at half-past seven. What are you trying for?"

"Remove," I answered.

"Oh, oh! why then if you take remove, we shall be in the same division, which will be convenient."

To this I assented, though I did not quite see wherein the convenience lay. More of the same sort of remarks and inquiries followed, and these, together with the business of unpacking my boxes, pretty well occupied the time until nine o'clock, when the supper-bell rang.

"Are you coming down to supper?" asked Martin.

"No, I am not hungry. I shall finish putting my things to rights."

"Well, I am going; I want to see some fellows there."

This was precisely what I did not want to do. I did not want to place myself in the midst of a set of strange faces, nor become an object for the questions and speculations which might prove too abundant. Nor, indeed, did I want to eat. The novelty of my position had taken away all appetite, and it seemed pleasanter to sit alone where I was, than to be hurried into what felt like the commencement of public life. The room we occupied was situated in a far corner of the house, and had hitherto remained unvisited by any of the other boys. The fact

of there being a new boy there was no attraction to them, rather the reverse ; and Martin, probably from not having been himself at Eton long, had not many friends. The quiet, therefore, I had enjoyed up to this time might naturally be expected to continue ; more especially as it was very evident, by the rush which took place downstairs, that not many in the house were likely to be as abstemious as myself. I remained, therefore, where I was, but did not go on with my unpacking. I sat down, and began to think of what was going on at home, and how lonely I was here. Then came before me visions of what would take place before my tutor next day ; and a dread of finding myself one of that busy crowd whose restlessness I had already observed at a distance from my window. Thoughts seemed to merge into dreams as I sat on, totally unconscious of how time went, and it was only the sound of a second bell that aroused me.

“Come on to prayers,” cried Martin, opening the door for a moment, and then rushing off.

“Prayers. Shall I go?” was my reflection, and at last I went. The supper tables in the dining-room had been cleared, and round them now stood all the boys of the house, arranged in their school order. At the end near the door was a desk placed on the table, in front of which stood Mr. Argles, and as soon as all had taken their places he began to read. We were not kept long, and as soon as it was over, all walked out in their order, saying good-night to my dame as they passed. Last of all came myself.

“Well,” said Mr. Argles, taking me by the shoulder ; “how do you like your room ? Pretty comfortable, eh ?”

"Yes, sir."

"That's right ; good-night."

It was difficult to bring myself to get up at seven o'clock next morning when I was called. The excessive fear, however, of being late caused me to be dressed in ample time, and I reached Mr. Turner's door nearly ten minutes before the half-hour. I rang the bell, and a servant appeared, who stared very hard at me.

"Mr. Turner told me to come here this morning," said I, in a sort of apologetic tone.

"Very good, sir. The young gentlemen's door is round the corner, but you can come in here this time."

And thus I became aware for the first time that tutor and pupils had each a different entry, and it was only on such state occasions as a visit with their parents, that the boys were allowed to violate the sanctity of the front door. This time, however, as it was a sort of first fault, there were no penalties attached to my mistake, and I found myself ushered into the study in due form.

"Well, what have you been accustomed to do?" said my tutor, after he had placed me at a table, on which certain writing materials had been laid. "What books have you done?"

I began at once to give the names of the various authors which I had dipped into at school, and made out a tolerably large catalogue. Whether it impressed my tutor or not with a belief in my knowledge, I cannot say. He made little or no comment on all I said, and, much to my surprise, instead of giving me some piece to do out of these manifold writers, set me down to work at a copy of verses, of which I was to do as many as I could before nine o'clock. I worked on, but the subject

did not appear to me very easy, and the consequence was that when the time came for showing up my composition, very little of the paper was covered. But it was a relief that I had not to wait till it was looked over, and was dismissed at once to my breakfast.

"You may go now ; come back again at eleven," said my tutor.

Instantly I rushed off to my room, delighted to have got some part of my work over, and quite ready to sit down to breakfast. There was a place laid for one, which, of course, meant myself ; but I had scarcely surveyed the slight preparations which had been made, before the door opened behind me, and a boy came in whom I had never seen before.

"You are Norton minor, ain't you ?" said he.

"Yes," I answered.

"Well then, I am come to tell you that I think you had better carry off anything you want for breakfast to my room. My name is Brown, you know, and your major always messed with us and the two Farrants, so you had better come and do so too."

I scarcely knew whether to be glad of such a proposal or not. There was no declining it, however, as it would have puzzled me amazingly to invent an excuse for so doing. My things were accordingly collected, and I followed my new friend to his room. It was one much about the size of my own, but looking on to a courtyard at the back of the house, and so not having the advantage of the street. At one side of it were two beds, and this explained the "us" whom Brown had spoken of in connection with the two Farrants ; for it seemed there was a young Brown as well as a young Farrant, and to judge

by what was going on, their elder brothers would not readily have dispensed with either. The table was in the centre of the room, with the breakfast things laid upon it. Lolling out of the window was a figure which I rightly conjectured to be Farrant major ; while on the opposite side of the room, kneeling in front of the fire, for it was only April, were two younger ones, busying themselves in the necessary but somewhat subordinate offices of making toast and coffee.

“Here is young Norton,” shouted Brown, as we came into the room.

“So you are come to mess with us,” said Farrant, “though I don’t see any probability of our getting anything for some time. Those young brutes at the fire won’t do a thing.”

“Don’t you talk about doing nothing, major,” screamed one of them, “when you two leave it all for us to do. I am sure it’s uncommon hard to have to do double fagging every day, once for our natural masters and once for you.”

“Come, none of that. You can’t eat toast unless it’s made.”

“Of course you can’t ; but that’s no reason you should make it for everybody besides yourself.”

“Well, you are both very lucky to have majors to tell you what to do,” said Brown, “and to give you all the looking after that yours do. You know fellows don’t come in here to look for a Lower boy when they want to send one anywhere ; and, therefore, for all that freedom you are bound to do what you are told.”

“Well, it will be a good thing when you get a fag of your own ; perhaps you will then make him do some

part of the work. Don't you think we are badly treated?" added he, appealing to me.

I certainly did think so, though I did not dare utter an opinion on the subject. The state of the case was this: Brown was a big Lower boy, who would get into



Fifth Form within a few weeks. Farrant had already attained that dignity, but was not sufficiently high to be the master of a fag. Under these circumstances they considered that nothing could be more proper than that their younger brothers should work for them. But this

work seemed always to be done under protest, and severe measures were often put in force, as I afterwards found out, to secure a due respect for what was ordered. It was, no doubt, convenient to have a couple of ready messengers always in the room, to be sent on any errand that might occur ; but whether it was a happy relation for brothers to bear to each other, might be questioned. It certainly did not generate love between the two, and might in some cases, though I do not think it did in this, have produced the opposite.

“What on earth are you doing there ?” cried Farrant, as a hissing noise was heard in the direction of the fire.

“Why, the coffee has boiled over,” answered his minor, in reply. “I should think you might have guessed that.”

“Well, I’ll tell you what it is ; you shall just go without your breakfast this morning—kick him down-stairs, Brown.”

The sentence was speedily executed, amid a mixture of yells and laughter from the victim. It struck me as a wonderful thing how so much good temper could be kept up under such constant abuse ; but the boys had become used to the same treatment every morning, and really did not care a straw for anything that was said or done to them by their brothers. The rest of our party, who were thus reduced to four, now sat down to breakfast, which passed off tolerably harmoniously, even though it was interrupted towards its close by the return of the expelled victim ; but to my surprise, little notice was taken of him, beyond what was conveyed in the remark that the eggs and everything else were all cold. It was evident that his sentence had not been intended to be observed.

and that his persecutors or protectors, as the case might be, cared little whether he returned or not.

Such was my introduction to the mess of which I became a regular member. The same scenes, slightly varied, were repeated every morning and evening, but without any permanent interruption of harmony. As regards myself, since I did not positively belong to any of them, I was never compelled to do anything, and was looked upon more in the light of a guest than anything else. Still I could not always stand idle, and see the work done without often lending a helping hand.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST SCHOOL—FIRST FRIENDS.

“ To learn straightways
The Latin phrase.”

Old Poet.

THREE were more interviews with my tutor that day, both at eleven o'clock, as he had told me, and in the afternoon. At the end of the last of them, he went off in cap and gown to consult the doctor, but soon reappeared, and proceeded to tell me what they thought of my work.

“ Your translations are very fair,” he began, “ but I cannot say the same for your verses. Did you do many with Mr. Lilly?”

“ Not very many,” I answered, with a sort of nervous anticipation as to what was coming.

“ I do not say,” he continued, “ that you would not be able to keep up with the Remove work, but I do not think it would do you any harm to try a little of the Fourth Form first. You know, if you are placed in the Upper Fourth now, you will get into Remove on the 4th of June, so you will only have six weeks of it.”

To this I could make no answer, for I did not know anything about it. It was clear, however, that I was not to be in the Remove, but this did not affect me much. I may have been disappointed ; but the ambition of a

boy of thirteen is not very great, especially when directed to an object of which he knows little ; and therefore I soon made up my mind to a humbler position on the school list.

“ You had better get the Fourth Form books then. I will give you an order for them at Williams’s, the book-seller ; and until the new boys are all regularly distributed, and the divisions made out, you may consider yourself ‘up to’ Mr. Ward.”

Mr. Ward was the junior master in the Upper School, and therefore took the Lower Fourth, together with those new boys who might not yet have been placed. Being “up to” a master merely signified in Eton language forming one of his division, and therefore going through the lessons under his superintendence at the stated school hours, and this is what I prepared to do next day.

At half-past seven then, punctually, I found myself under the gate of the school-yard, ready to begin the regular work of school life. In front of me, forming the far side of the quadrangle, was the clock-tower with its two pinnacles, and flanked on either side by the private rooms of the Provost and Fellows. The whole of the right side of the square was taken up by the chapel, the great size and architecture of which have made it familiar by name, if not by sight, even to non-Etonians. The spaces between the base of each buttress and its neighbour were raised slightly from the level of the quadrangle, and paved with large flagstones. Thus, however unintentionally on the part of the architect, were formed several fairly good fives courts, which were rarely without occupants during any of the play-hours in the

day-time. Opposite to this again, and on the left of the gateway where I stood, was the range of building appropriated to the scholars on the foundation, called peculiarly Collegers, in order to distinguish them from the Oppidans, or boys who lived in the town. Here was the ancient Long Chamber, venerable for its antiquity, as well as for the famous names which it had helped to rear. A continuation of the same line showed the small windows, each of which denoted a separate little room for the use of the bigger boys among those seventy which the whole building contained. Such at least was the information which I afterwards picked up, for it is not to be supposed that, coming to a new place for the first time, I took it all in by intuition. As I stood under the gateway that first morning, all I saw was the outline of the buildings, without having an idea as to what was within them ; but since it is probable that others might care to be a little more enlightened than I was at the time, it has been necessary to borrow from knowledge of a more recent date.

“ Hallo, Norton ! is that you ?” cried some one behind me, as I stood in silent contemplation of the hands of the clock. And turning round, I saw Jackson close by, who had been with me in Blankshill. We had both known that we should meet at Eton this summer, but from not having gone to the same house, or the same tutors, we had not yet seen each other.

“ Who are you up to ?” was one of the first questions I asked, after our mutual greetings were over.

“ Oh, I am up to Ward for the present. My tutor, I believe, doesn’t like any of his pupils taking Remove, so I suppose I shall be placed in the Upper Fourth.”

"That's just what I am to be," I said. "But here comes Ward. I say, let us sit together in school."

And so we proceeded to follow the crowd which had collected at the master's heels. Most of his division had been waiting for him outside the school-gate, and had turned in with him as he passed, and these were the boys among whom we now found ourselves. Full as each one of them seemed of their various friends and acquaintances, they had still leisure to look about them, and observe that there were two new faces, as Jackson and myself came up. "What's your name?" "Who's your tutor?" "Where do you board?" were questions which poured upon us from almost every mouth in succession of the assembly in which we were. The unwritten code, which is handed down by tradition among Eton boys, declares that any boy may inquire the name of any other who has come to the school more recently than himself, and compels an answer. As usual then, all the small boys who had only made their appearance themselves some three months back, were the foremost to claim their superiority over the new comers, while they thus gratified their curiosity; and it is doubtful how long our examination might have lasted, had not Mr. Ward at length sent a messenger into the school-yard, to say that he was waiting for his division, and that they must come in.

The room which was set apart for us was one on the ground floor. It was low and dark, in spite of a window on each side which gave a double light. Two wooden pillars were placed, as it seemed, to support the ceiling, after the manner of tent-poles; and on one of these tradition averred that the Duke of Wellington had cut his name,

and that it was still to be seen there. Of the two sides of the room, which were not cut up by the windows, one was appropriated to the boys, who were arranged on rows of parallel seats, while facing them, on the other, was a sort of small raised dais, with a plain wooden table, and an equally plain arm-chair behind it, in which Mr. Ward sat. As we entered, all took their places, Jackson and myself together, at the far end of one of the front forms.

"Who are you?" said Mr. Ward, as his eye caught sight of us, as he looked round his division preparatory to commencing the lesson. "What's your name?" he added, specially to me.

"Norton, sir."

"Were you sent here?"

"Yes, sir; my tutor told me to come to you."

"And who is your tutor?"

I remembered Martin's advice about titles at Eton, so I answered boldly, "Turner, sir."

A suppressed laugh ran through the room, and Mr. Ward looked up very fiercely.

"I suppose you mean *Mr.* Turner," he said. "How dare you speak of your tutor in such a way? If you were not a new comer, I should punish you at once for it."

I was astounded, for I had only done what Martin had told me was the right thing, and I whispered so to Jackson.

"Ah, that's all very well," he said, "when you are talking to other boys about him; but when you are speaking to a master of one of themselves, you must always give him his title."

We were recalled to our books by hearing Mr. Ward's voice. "Now then, Thompson, begin to construe." The

boy stood up, but if the fact of his being called upon was a reason why he himself should pay attention to his book, it seemed to operate in an exactly different way upon the others. All were freed from the risk of their own knowledge being tested, and seemed to rejoice in their deliverance by an outburst of feelings anything but industrial. Nor were these sufficiently checked by our presiding master. He was unfortunately shortsighted, so that he could not see much, and a great deal of what he did see, his own mild disposition, added to his shyness, encouraged him to overlook. Indeed, it had evidently been a great exertion to him to bring out the words that he had used to me. With such a man, therefore, it was no wonder that liberties were taken, which could never have been passed by under a more effectual rule. Pellets of paper flew about the room, some falling even on the dais in front ; books even were tossed from one to the other, and there was no pretence at silence, for every one was talking to his neighbour. It was in vain that Mr. Ward attempted to single out the chief offenders ; he could not see them, and they appeared to consider him, being a new comer (for he had not long been a master), as legitimate an object of persecution as the freshest and mildest boy in the division.

It was not then with a feeling of respect, either for the place I had been in, or for that body of whom I then considered Mr. Ward as a fair specimen, that I left the school when the clock struck. Later experience showed me that the difficulties of a new master may be as great as those of a new boy ; but this never entered my head at the time, and all I thought as I passed through the school-yard, was that Eton ways were very different

from other schools, and that the boys did not seem to care much about their superiors.

I had lost sight of Jackson, and was proceeding slowly through that space which lies between the front of the college and "the wall" which forms a sort of boundary to the main road, when in the distance I saw a face I knew coming up. This was Carron, whom I had known at home, as boys call it ; that is to say, my father and his were friends, and we had consequently seen something of each other apart from any school intercourse. He was at my dame's, but strange to say I had not yet seen him, though I had often wondered why he had not come to my room.

"How d'ye do ?" said he, coming up and putting out his hand.

"How d'ye do ? I am so glad to see you, but I wonder we have not met before."

"Why the fact is, you see, that I did not exactly know where your room was, so I could not come to look after you."

"No," said I, never thinking whether he might not have inquired.

"I was just going to Brown's," he continued, "over the way. I wanted a cup of coffee, but I find I have got no money in my pocket."

"I have got some," said I, quite eagerly ; "let me pay for you."

"Well, do, and we'll make it right some other time."

We were just crossing the street, when another boy came up towards us, and looked inquiringly at me.

"I say," said Carron, before the other could ask a question, "this fellow is going to sock me," and he pointed at me and laughed.

There was nothing obnoxious perhaps in the words, which merely signified that I was going to pay for what he intended to eat; but there was something in the tone in which they were spoken, and the gestures with which they were accompanied, that made me at once take a dislike to the person who had uttered them. It was evident that there was a secret understanding between the two as to the reason why Carron should be in my company. He himself felt probably somewhat ashamed of being seen walking with a new boy; but when the reason was given, in the fact that that same new boy, in the simplicity of his heart, had promised to devote some pocket-money to the gratification of his companion, he felt that his condescension was fully accounted for. Whether his friend thought so too, I know not; but at all events he did not appear to be so thoroughly amused at it as Carron was. Probably the truth was that he thought very little of both of us; for Carron, as I afterwards found out, had not many friends, and as for myself, being unknown to everybody, it could not be expected that any one would interest themselves for me.

"This is Brown's," said my companion, as we arrived at a small door, which, though invitingly open, might have seemed to belong to a private house. "Come in."

I followed him accordingly, and found myself in a small shop, which seemed like a confectioner's as far as I could see; but it was so crowded with boys of all sizes, that I could scarcely make out at first what it was like. At last, however, I made out that it was a small room, divided in the middle by a counter which ran from side to side. On this counter were various eatables displayed: a ham, from which slices were being rapidly cut, in order

to be formed into sandwiches, tongues and brawn undergoing the same fate, and interspersed among them all a strange mixture of plates of bread and butter and empty coffee-cups. Over all this presided a man in a white apron, whom I rightly conjectured to be Mr. Brown; while on the opposite side of the counter, forming a semicircle like the horse-shoe in front of a show, were seats, on which were to be seen boys in every stage from hungry expectancy to repletion. By far the greater number of those present could not get a seat at all, and stood blocking up the small space in the centre, and forming no slight obstacle to the attempts which were made by Carron and myself to reach the counter.

"I say," shouted he, over the shoulders of some of these living barriers; "I say, Brown, I want a cup of coffee and a plate of sandwiches. And look here, this fellow is going to pay for me," he added, pointing to me.

Long before I had summoned up courage to ask for anything in such a way as would attract attention, the plate of sandwiches had been handed over and eaten by my friend.

"What, have not you got anything yet?" he said. "Look here, here is a place," and he shoved me between two other boys who were taking up more than their share of room at the counter. "But you know," he continued, "it's no use my waiting for you now, you'll be no end of a time. I must go off, so good-bye."

I daresay he was not any more sorry to get rid of me than I was to lose sight of him. It was evident that he had come with me merely for the sake of his breakfast, and not for the pleasure of my company. After once introducing me to the shop and its proprietor, he had

been too busy ever to look after me again. Older and less questionable acquaintances had been found in the room, and from that moment, the purpose for which I had been taken up having been fulfilled, I was ignored.

I was too much occupied, however, by the strangeness of the place in which I found myself to think much of anything else. It puzzled me at first, how boys, who were all to get their regular breakfast at nine o'clock, could come and eat here at a quarter past eight ; but when I thought that in many cases the pupil room came close upon fagging time, and there were but few minutes available for breakfast, it was not surprising that many of the smaller boys should thus fortify themselves beforehand. Then, too, there were many who really felt the want of something between the time of getting up and their breakfast, two hours later ; and there were others, too, who dropped in merely because it was a pleasant way of spending time if they were sufficiently in pocket to afford it. Nor was this to be wondered at, for what was served out was certainly all very good of its kind, and I myself thought, as I swallowed my coffee, which the difficulty of obtaining had made more sweet, that it was fortunate after all that I had fallen in with Carron, since for the future I should know where to come to on a cold morning.

CHAPTER V.

FAGGING—THE WALL—PUPIL ROOM.

“ Ah me ! my retrospective soul !
As over memory’s muster roll
I cast my eyes anew,
My former comrades all the while
Rise up before me, rank and file,
And form in dim review.”

Hood.

DAYs passed on, and soon the first fortnight of my Eton existence had expired. During this time I had left the turbulent atmosphere of Mr. Ward’s division, and had taken my place as one of the regular members of the Upper Fourth, and accordingly I now sat at the feet of Mr. Brougham, who presided over them. His was a different rule from that to which I had first been introduced. Familiar with the work to which he had already devoted some five or six years of his life, experienced also in the treatment of the various dispositions which came before him, he could almost insensibly maintain his authority among his boys, nor did he ever forfeit any of his popularity through the strictness of his conduct in school. In him the boys felt that they had a superior, but liked him all the better for it ; whereas in the case of Mr. Ward, they almost looked down upon him, and, therefore, so far from winning their regard, he became merely an object for their ridicule. And besides being

glad of the exchange in point of masters, it was also a gain to me being in a division where there were one or two that I knew besides Jackson. Martin was still one higher than myself, but in my own lot were Carron and also Farrant minor, so that I had always some one in my dame's to consult about lessons or anything else that might occur.

With regard, therefore, to actual school-work, things were going on favourably for me ; nor was it otherwise with reference to out-of-school matters. The first feelings of strangeness had been got over, and I no longer felt that I was alone among the multitude. There were far fewer inquiries now as to my name, or on any other subjects which might ruffle me, and though I was still one of the newest comers to the school, I already began to feel some of that confidence which every Eton boy gradually picks up. Of all those things which a fortnight ago were new to me, little now remained of which I had not acquired some knowledge, either by personal experience or observation ; and if the merciful respite of a fortnight had hitherto prevented my familiarizing myself with the troubles of fagging, still, from what I had seen of it in the case of others, I was not prepared to be very much terrified when it came to my own turn to submit to it.

The list of fags had been made out at the beginning of the half by the captain of the house, and I found that my name was included among those selected for his own peculiar service. This he was careful to remind me of on the last evening of my freedom ; but no such warning was really needed, for the day on which I was to begin my work had fixed itself long ago in my memory.

Punctual, therefore, to the minute, I presented myself at half-past eight the next morning at the door of a room which I already knew tolerably well, since it was next to my own, and I had often been into it when Martin was engaged alone in those duties which eventually I had to share with him. Now he was not there, not having yet come out of morning school, but there were other fellow-slaves besides him, so all the work was not thrown on my solitary and inexperienced shoulders.

"Well, so here you are," said my owner, as I came into the room. "Let me see what there is for you to do. You had better help to lay the cloth, and then go and make two pieces of toast. You go and boil the milk, Dickson ; and you, Martin," he added, as the latter came in, "you go and poach the eggs."

There were still two in the room left unemployed, but these were waiting for the orders of their own immediate master. Seymour, the captain of the house, had a brother who was very little below him in the school, and the consequence was that as the brothers always messed together, there were five fags to do their work, three belonging to the elder and two to the younger one ; but neither interfered with the orders of the other, and, therefore, as Seymour minor had not yet come in, his fags had to wait to know what there was for them to do.

It may easily be supposed that among such a number of us the amount of work allotted to each was not very great, and when we got down to the little kitchen, which was reserved for the use of the boys, I did not fail to congratulate myself on the simplicity of my duties compared to all that I saw going on around me.

"Well, I do think it's a shame," cried one fellow ; "here have I got to boil eggs, make toast, frizzle ham, all at the same time ; and as soon as that's done, I have got to go up town and bring Peel's things down from the raft. Why I shall get no breakfast at all, for I am going to my tutor's at ten."

"Ah, that comes from fagging for a master who has no one else to work for him," said Martin. "You should get with the Seymours, or some fellows like that."

"But it's not my fault, I don't choose whom I am going to fag for. If I did I should take Baily," he said, with a laugh, for Baily enjoyed the reputation of being so much in awe of his fags as never to request them to do anything.

"Well, I hope you will get him some day," said Martin. "I say," he continued, turning to me ; "I say, Norton, have you done your toast ?"

"Not quite yet," I answered, "the fire is so slow."

"Why, how on earth are you doing it ?" said he. "You are holding it about a mile from the bars, as if you were afraid it might catch fire."

"Look here, I'll show you how to do it," broke in the overtasked youth, whose name I had ascertained to be Waller. "Don't put it to the bars at all, hold it flat over the top of the fire, like this," he added, taking it out of my hand and showing me the way he meant.

"But it will get smoked," I cried.

"Never mind, you are not going to eat it ; and if it does get a little too black, you can always scrape it with the back of a knife."

I was silent, and hesitated how I should go on with my task ; whether I should adopt the advice which had

en given me, or continue in the slower but more careful way in which I had begun.

"It's all very well," said Waller, as he saw my hesitation, "if you have got lots of time and nothing to do, you may toast it as if it was for yourself; but if your master is one of those like mine, who gives me six times too much to do, or if you have any dislike to him, then and you can always pay him out in this way."

"I have got nothing else to do except this," said I; and feeling that I had thus given an excuse for not abandoning my own method, I turned back to the fire.

"Well, you'll be some time yet, Norton," said Martin, so I shan't wait."

But the fire burned up, and my two pieces of toast were finished in less time than might have been expected; and when I reached Seymour's room, Martin and the rest were still there, and all convulsed in a roar of laughter.

"Well, you have done that toast well," said Seymour, as I put it on the table. "Now then, fags, you may all go."

"What was everybody laughing about?" said I to Martin, as soon as we had got beyond the door.

"Why, didn't you hear about Dyke?"

"No."

"This is what it was—when Seymour minor came in, everything almost had been done; so as there was nothing left for his fags to do, Cooper was sent into college, and Dyke told to fetch some pigeon's milk at Brown's."

"But he didn't go?"

"Yes he did though, and he had just been telling us the result when you came in. He went into the shop. 'Have you any pigeon's milk?' said he. 'No, sir,'

answered Brown, 'but perhaps Mr. Barnes has.' So the fool went on to Barnes's, where he was unsuccessful again, and then came back to tell Seymour. But I don't know that he has found out why we laughed at him now."

"Well, I can't understand a fellow making such a fool of himself as that."

"No, perhaps not ; but then you must recollect that he has never been to a school of any sort before, so it's not so wonderful that he should be imposed upon at first."

"Yes, it's all nonsense people keeping boys at home till they are about thirteen—then when they come to Eton they have not an idea what to do. I am sure I am very glad I went to school."

"So am I," said Martin. "One cannot help thinking that when one looks at Dyke. He may be a very good fellow, but somehow he gets more bullied than any of the other new fellows."

All this was perfectly true. Dyke had come to Eton fresh from home, and never having mixed with any number of boys of his own age, the consequence was that he found himself utterly ignorant of the manners and customs of the rising generation which was now around him. He was, in fact, as schoolboys would call it, the "greenest" who had appeared at my dame's for a long time. It might, indeed, contribute to the amusement of the house that such a character should be among them, but to the individual himself his ignorance of things in general produced most disagreeable results ; and I was certainly taught to recognize the folly of those loving parents who cannot bear to part with their children during their youth, but by such affection condemn the objects of it to unnecessary troubles.

It happened to be a Tuesday, and therefore I had to go to my tutor "after twelve," to finish my verses ; "after twelve" being the popular denomination of those two hours which intervene between eleven o'clock school and dinner-time, in the same way as "after four" is taken to represent from the end of three o'clock school to the next occasion when the boys' presence may be required. These spaces of time are always supposed to be playhours, but since there is an evident necessity that the school-work, including verses and themes, should be prepared at some time or other, and since it is also thought inadvisable to trust the selection of this time entirely to the boys themselves, it has become the rule for each tutor to require the attendance of his pupils during some portion of them, in order to see that the work is really got through. Now Mr. Turner was remarkably lavish of his attention to us, more so, perhaps, than any other tutor was ; and he thought nothing of spending whole "after twelves," and "after fours" too, in the room which, from the use made of it, was always called "pupil room." It may have been very conscientious on his part, and probably the confinement was as irksome to him as it was to us ; but the Fourth Form, who habitually congregated there, never thought that any one was making a sacrifice but themselves, and considered themselves the most aggrieved of all, not failing either to abuse the tutor, who would as gladly have dispensed with them as they with him. It could never be popular among boys to be shut up in a close room during the finest portion of the day, and to have to give that time to their lessons which others were spending on their amusement ; but it would never have done to have allowed the idle swarm of "lower boys" to

work at their own hours, however much discretion might harmlessly be given to their superiors in the Fifth and Sixth Forms. Pupil room, therefore, became an evil, though a necessary one, the weight of which fell on the lower parts of the school, and as a member of this body



I was grumbling with the rest as we came out of our regular eleven o'clock lesson.

"Oh, here's old Brian with his cart," cried one fellow. "Come along, Norton, and let's get some cherries before I go to my tutor's."

I followed to where an old man was dispensing various articles of confectionery from a large hand-barrow, which he had stationed up against the wall. Ices, cakes of all sorts, cherries and strawberries, were being distributed, most of them being given "on tick," *i.e.*, on credit, to the boys who crowded around ; but none of these delicacies were much in my way. I was more attracted by the display of another of these licensed vendors, who had a very miscellaneous collection spread out on the top of the wall. First came a tin can supported on legs, and filled with tartlets of all sorts ; behind this were a quantity of flowers in pots, evidently intended for sale ; and not the least striking object was the guardian of them all. Not that he was positively anything extremely out of the way ; there were no glaring peculiarities of dress or manner ; but still people who gazed at him, even for the first time, could not help feeling that they were in the presence of a character. A stout figure, dressed in a somewhat long coat of dark-blue cloth, with a velvet collar to it, was surmounted by a face whose decidedly rosy hue and small twinkling eyes betokened a good nature and an amount of quiet humour which it was impossible to overlook. There was a calm sedateness, too, which seemed as if nothing could disturb it ; the crowd of questioners about him appeared not to have the smallest influence, his movements still continued to be gone through leisurely, and his words came out slow and measured, like bubbles rising from a well of oil.

This was no less a personage than Spankey, as his name was supposed to be throughout all Eton. Who he was, none could ever tell ; no one knew where he came from or any of his relations, but all sorts of stories were

current about him. Some declared that he had seen better days, and was only reduced to his present occupation through poverty ; others said that he was really well off, and had a certain amount of property in the Isle of Wight ; and certainly there is no doubt as to one thing which might countenance this, and that is, that when a subscription list was opened to raise funds for building the new church of St. John's at Eton, his name was found in it as a subscriber of fifty pounds. On all these conflicting rumours Spankey himself never threw the slightest light ; he was content to go on selling tarts in quiet, and enjoying the popularity he had acquired both with masters and boys. By the lower members of the school, indeed, he was looked up to as a perfect oracle, for he seemed to know everything, could predict who would be members of the Eleven or Eight, and tell the name and history of the latest comer, stringing on to it, if necessary, a list of all his relations, with their various achievements.

All this had become known to me before the time, when wandering from Brian's cart, I proceeded in person to make his acquaintance ; and therefore, though with any one else I might have been startled, with him it gave me no surprise when I heard myself called by my right name, though it was the first time he had ever spoken to me.

“ Good morning, Mr. Norton, sir. Beautiful day, sir.”

“ Yes, it's very fine,” I answered. “ I wanted to look at some of your flowers.”

“ Certainly, sir ; which would you prefer, sir ? Here are geraniums, very fine, sir ; and calceolarias too, sir, just coming into bloom.”

Nothing which Spankey could have said or done would have surprised me very much, and therefore I took no notice of the peculiar suavity of his expressions, and the redundancy of “sirs” which he was pleased to lavish on me. Indeed I found out, as I saw more of him, that it was almost impossible he should utter three consecutive words without a “sir” coming at the end of them ; and it was marvellous how he could change them as easily as he did into “my lord,” when any of the young aristocracy came up to him.

“How shall I get these to my room ?” I asked, after selecting three or four pots.

“I will carry them along with you, sir, if you are going there now, sir ; yes, sir. To Mr. Argles’s, is it not, sir ?”

“Yes it is, but how did you know that ?”

“I knew it, sir ; yes, sir. I know every one pretty nearly, sir. Do you see the little gentleman yonder, sir ?” he continued, pointing out to me some small boy on the other side of the street. “Well, sir, he is Lord Darrell, with ninety thousand a year, sir, as they say. I knew his father when he was here, sir, and this gentleman is at your tutor’s, sir ; perhaps you did not know, sir.”

I certainly did not know it, but during my walk with Spankey from the Wall to my dame’s, I got acquainted with one or two faces through his telling me their history. I was shown the probable steerer of the Eight, and was assured that no one else could possibly be chosen ; the captain of the school was pointed out, as well as various specimens of the young nobility ; so that by the time I took leave of my friend, I had become as sincere an admirer of him as any one could have been, and felt the greatest respect for his omniscience.

It was past twelve after the flowers had been arranged in our window-sill, so I put my books under my arm, and ran as hard as I could to my tutor's. It was vain to hope that I should not be late, but I was eager not to aggravate my fault by any further delay. Breathless, therefore, I arrived at the door of his pupil room, and paused for a moment to recover myself. As I did so, the noise of many voices fell upon my ear, and the unusual sound of laughter served to reassure me. It was evident that my tutor could not be there, or there would be no such disturbance going on; so I boldly opened the door, and entered, feeling safe for the moment from any reproof or punishment. He had been there, so I was told, only a few minutes ago, but had gone out of the room suddenly to speak to some one in the study. The moment of his departure had of course been the signal for an outburst of tongues, and there was a general confusion throughout the room, which nothing but the release from previous restraint could have originated.

"I say, give me your theme to copy, while my tutor is out," cried one fellow.

"All right," was the answer, and immediately a book containing the required article was sent flying across the room.

In another corner, a couple of Fourth Form were busy unravelling the difficulties in Arnold's exercises, by the help of a key, commonly called a crib, the proper leaves of which had been torn from their binding, and were now spread out before them. But what most attracted my attention were the proceedings going on at the desk, the seat of authority itself. Two of Mr. Turner's dutiful

pupils were there busily engaged with the pens lying in the inkstand, each of which in its turn was taken up, and the points dashed against the table, thus effectually splitting the nibs and rendering them unserviceable. The earnest perseverance with which their work was carried on, and the remarks which they made anticipating what my tutor's feelings would be, amused me excessively ; and I have no doubt that every pen on the desk would have been sacrificed, had it been possible to get through the whole number before my tutor himself came in. Fortunately for himself, the handle of the study-door was heard to turn before all had been destroyed ; the two boys jumped back to their seats, cribs were put away, and there was a perfect silence as Mr. Turner resumed his place at the desk.

He looked round to see that all were at their work, but never noticed that I had come in during his absence, and I consequently felt relieved from the dread I had hitherto entertained of being called to account for my delay.

"Now then, be quiet, you boys. Go on with your work." And with these words he began examining the pile of exercises which lay before him. Each boy, as he finished his verses or his Arnold, as the case might be, wrote out a fair copy and laid it on the desk ; this in its turn was looked over and corrected in the presence of the boy, and was eventually rewritten, to be presented with the corrected copy to the master in school. The duty of going through every boy's work in this way was no light task, but it was fortunately one which could be got over while at the same time a supervision was maintained over the rest of the doings in pupil room.

“Fraser, come here,” said Mr. Turner, as he took the first of the pile on to his blotting-book, and proceeded to run through the composition. A false quantity in the first line, and two violent scratches with the pen were made under it. “Dear, what pens!” he continued, as he took up two or three in succession before finding a good one. At last he went on with his corrections. Mistakes or bad expressions were corrected or improved; and at the end the paper was signed with the letter F, after everything else, which indicated that on the whole, and in spite of the false quantity, the composition was fair.

All boys have some feeling of pleasure on receiving any mark, however small it may be, of approval, and Fraser returned to his seat with a smile which showed he was satisfied, and the next exercise was placed by Mr. Turner on the blotting-paper.

“Collett, come here,” he cried, somewhat impatiently, and the individual called upon slowly made his way up to the desk. “How can you bring me such a filthy piece of paper?” continued my tutor, pointing to the blots all over it; “and here are mistakes more abominable even than the blots. Take it away, take it away, I will have nothing to say to it;” and with these words it was torn almost, but not quite, into two pieces, making it into what we called a pair of breeches.

The boy did not seem to care very much for what had happened. He may have been accustomed to it, but the consequences of being torn over in this way, entailed, at all events, the trouble of correcting one's own mistakes, instead of having them corrected by Mr. Turner; and also might eventually bring a punishment from the master in school, to whom it would become known. But

custom makes everything easy, and even a flogging loses a great deal of its effect by being frequently repeated.

My own exercise was not yet finished, and therefore I was not called up to the desk during any portion of that after twelve. Sitting still as I did in a corner, my work gradually approached towards completion, but I was not so thoroughly industrious as not to observe what was going on around me. Neither the words nor the gestures of my tutor were any of them lost upon me ; but still though they might afford me amusement for a minute, they had not sufficient power to reconcile me entirely to my two hours' confinement. The striking of each quarter was listened for as it sounded from the College clock ; and when at last two dull heavy strokes proclaimed it was two o'clock, all felt relieved that the time of their captivity was over.

"Go, all of you," said Mr. Turner. "Put up your books ; don't be late for absence."

So all of us rushed out, those that boarded at dames' houses with their books under their arm, and made for the school-yard. Every half-holiday there was absence here at two o'clock, when all had to answer to their names as they were called over. The Doctor took his stand at the bottom of the chapel steps, and went over the list of Fifth and Sixth Form, while one of the lower masters, as his turn came, called the Lower boys from one of the raised fives courts between the buttresses. After this was done, and we had answered to our names, all strolled back to their respective houses, and the dinner bell was just ringing as I got in sight of my dame's.

CHAPTER VI.

AQUATICS.

“ But his limbs were borne up bravely
By the stout heart within,
And our good father Tiber
Bare bravely up his chin.”

Macaulay.

WITH the warm weather all the summer amusements had come in. Cricket, indeed, had begun at the very beginning of the half ; but boating and bathing, which had to do with a more chilly element, had been prohibited until the summer seemed to have actually commenced. Now, however, the water was more sought after than land sports, and as cricket had never had very much attraction for me, I was glad to be able to turn to the river in the hours of amusement. What I chiefly looked forward to was the pleasure of having a boat of my own, and being able to paddle about as I chose ; but before this could become possible it was necessary to pass an examination in swimming, which had been instituted in order that there might be some security that those who were constantly in boats had the power of saving themselves if upset.

Foremost among other counsellors, Farrant undertook the task of duly impressing upon me the necessity of learning to swim as soon as possible. Those who got

through their trial satisfactorily were said to have passed. And the process of doing so was simply called "passing," every one at Eton understanding by such a word what had been gone through. Not only was it desirable for the sake of the boating to pass quickly, but also there was a certain amount of disgrace attached to the fact of not having done so. Every summer there was a list posted up in some conspicuous part of each house, on which were inscribed the names of all those who were "non nants," that is to say, not swimmers ; and in proportion as a name rose towards the top, the owner of it became more and more an object of contempt from his backwardness, and the words "swink," and "non nant," became terms of reproach, peculiarly disagreeable to those who knew that they ought long ago to have been free of them.

I was as eager therefore myself to become a swimmer as any of those could be whose recommendations I listened to ; and the very first day that bathing was allowed, I made Farrant minor promise to come with me to Cuckoo Weir after school was over. He himself had passed the year before, and therefore could act perhaps as my first instructor ; at all events, it was well to go with some one who knew where the best places were, and the holes where I might get out of my depth.

A rush from school the moment the clock struck, books thrown in at one of the ground-floor windows of my dame's, were all the necessary preliminaries before our expedition ; and Farrant and myself soon found ourselves at the bottom of Keate's Lane, on our way to the bathing place. Past the mathematical school, where the hum of voices told that the boys had not yet been

dismissed ; then following the road which skirts South Meadow, and turning into the fields by the path which leads under the viaduct, we soon arrived at the stream which from time immemorial has been known as Cuckoo Weir, and which has been set apart as the peculiar property of Lower boys. The bathing places indeed at Eton are graduated like the divisions of the school itself ; for the Lower boys there is this stream, which is a small branch of the river, but not so clear or so open as the main course, though far better suited for those who are only just beginning to swim. Fifth Form are promoted to the enjoyment of the river itself, and the name of Athens has been given to a place where its full breadth is least impeded by sand-banks or rushes. But the best place of all is reserved for the Sixth Form, and the delights of the rushing waters of Boveney Weir are kept uncontaminated by any visitors of inferior degree. There is no regulation that a Sixth Form may not condescend to the use of any bathing place below that one which peculiarly belongs to his station. All may take advantage of what is beneath them, but none may do so of what is above them ; all Upper boys therefore may bathe at Cuckoo Weir if they choose, but no Lower boys may come on their own authority to Athens. An equal distribution of numbers, however, is kept up at the different places, by the fact that each one to which a boy is admitted, in turn rises above the one he has left, and those who may enjoy the pleasures of the open stream, rarely care to make use of their privilege of returning to the confined waters of the Lower boys.

When we arrived on the banks, therefore, though there were a good many intending bathers to be seen, all

belonged to the same class, and were much about my own standing in school, however much my seniors they might be in the amount of time which they had spent at Eton. Some were on the opposite bank to which we were ; there the side had been formed into a grassy slope which ended abruptly about a couple of feet above the level of the water, and seemed to run down perpendicularly for some depth. I instantly guessed that it was only swimmers that frequented that side of the water. Our own bank indeed rose higher than the other, and descended like a miniature cliff toward the stream ; but there were wooden steps placed at certain distances along the sides, and it afforded some consolation to those who were afraid of sinking, to observe that these reached the bottom of the water very soon after they had passed its surface, and that there were unmistakable evidences that the ground shelved slowly down, in the amount of mud that seemed to rise even around those who were at some distance from the bank, and who from their submersion I might have taken for swimmers, did not the evidence of what they were supported on make itself thus plain.

" I shall go over to Italy. That's what they call the opposite bank, you know;" said Farrant.

" O no, stay here ; it's too deep for me on that side."

" Well, but you can go in over the side of the punt, which is in shallow water," he continued.

" Yes, but I shan't be able to get out again. It's uncommonly awkward climbing into a punt from the water, and I should be out of my depth long before I got near those steps there."

With some difficulty I persuaded him to remain where we were ; but it was clear that being a swimmer he did

not much like finding himself in the company of none but those who like myself were beginners ; and the moment he was in the water he dashed off to the opposite side, nor did I see anything more of him till we met again on the bank.

The water was very shallow, as I had anticipated, and for some distance the bottom was nothing but mud, into which my feet sank over the ankles at each stride that I made ; but soon this changed very considerably, and I found that the bed of the stream towards its centre became nothing but a number of large sharp stones, which were very painful to walk upon. Under these circumstances, it seemed the best thing to be done would be to make my way to the punt ; so after the usual inane splashings which non-swimmers have recourse to in order to keep themselves warm, I waded on, intending to profit by the instructions which I might receive from the man who was stationed there in order to teach the boys.

There is a special corps of watermen in the service of the college, who are stationed, some at the bathing places, some in different parts of the river, and whose duty is to make themselves as useful as they can to Eton boys, while at the same time they take care that no "non nant" appears on the river without being reported by them. One of these was always to be found at Cuckoo Weir, where he sat in his punt like the presiding god of the stream, and issued his orders, or his instructions, as the case might be, to the aquatic crowd that thronged around him. To him I now repaired, in order to get my first lesson in the art of swimming.

"I say, Talbot," I began, "I want you to show me what to do."

"Well, sir ; you have not been here before, I think."

"No, I have not ; how shall I begin ?"

"You had better have a turn in the belt. Look here, pass this under your arms." And with these words he held out a pole, from a hook at the end of which was suspended a belt. One end of it, however, being unfastened, I could pass it under my chest and then hook it up again. This being accomplished, I presented somewhat the appearance of a fish at the end of the line, while Talbot's pole, as he held it and supported me in the water, was exactly like a rod ; but it was by no means a bad way of teaching a young beginner, for I was held up in the water so as not to get a ducking, and at the same time could practise striking out with arms and legs together.

It is not to be supposed that I learnt much during my first lesson. It was necessarily a short one, for many were waiting to take my place, and the most tedious part of swimming is learning to make the first stroke. But I persevered ; every day I came down to Cuckoo Weir, and every day took a lesson. Soon I could swim two or three strokes by myself, and this much accomplished, the improvement began to be rapid. Ten strokes followed ; then one day when I got unusually bold, I ventured across the deep water, and arrived in safety, though puffing and blowing, at Italy steps. Thus I got on, and soon began to consult Talbot as to when I should try to pass.

"Well, you see, there's passing to-morrow ; but you had better wait till next week," he said. "You can try on Tuesday."

So it was settled that Tuesday should be the day. Both Martin and myself were in a great state of excite-

ment, for he was also going to make his first attempt that day. Neither of us, therefore, let slip any opportunity of practising before the real trial came. We used to bathe every day together, and swim races with each other ; but in these I was always mortified to find that Martin beat me, and I began to look forward to Tuesday's work with less confidence than I had before.

The moment chapel was over on the looked-for afternoon, we started together for Cuckoo Weir. A good number were going in the same direction, many for the same purpose as ourselves, and many in order to be spectators from the bank, for passing always attracts a certain number of lookers-on. We stripped on the bank, and then all who were candidates for the honour of being reckoned swimmers, jumped into the punt which Talbot held ready at the steps. The examination was to take place at a part of the stream higher up, where the deep water was of greater extent. To this point we all proceeded, some five-and-twenty in number, punted by Talbot. The examiners, who were certain of the masters in school, known for the occasion as passing masters, had not yet arrived, but they did not keep us waiting long, and as soon as they made their appearance, the senior boy among us took his place on the well of the punt, in order to be ready to take a header into the stream.

“What's your name ?” cried out one of the three masters who were on the bank.

“Jones, sir,” responded the boy, in an equally loud voice.

“Where do you board ?”

“Mr. Carter's, sir.”



PASSING.

"Afternoon walks"
- Stephen Day



"Very well ; go on."

A splash followed, and Jones descended head first into the water. For a time we lost sight of him, but he soon reappeared, and after pushing the wet hair from off his face, began to strike out in his best style along the appointed course. The first pole was soon reached ; round this he had to turn, and come back past the punt again, and round a second pole situated about the same distance from the starting point as the other had been, only, of course, in an opposite direction. Now he was swimming against the stream, and though it never was very strong in such a place, it could still make some difference, and his pace was sensibly diminished.

"Bring your arms well round. Fingers closed together," shouted one of the masters from the bank, evidently stimulating the boy to do his best. And he really did not swim badly ; slowly, perhaps, but without much appearance of fatigue ; so that when the second pole had been turned, and he approached the steps from which he could gain the bank, all felt that he must have passed.

In this way all went on in order until it came to Martin's turn, who acquitted himself as well as most of the rest ; but it made me a little nervous to see that even he was required to take an extra turn beyond the fixed course, as if his fate still remained doubtful. I knew that he was a much better swimmer than myself, and it struck me that if there was doubt about him, there would be something far worse about me. When, however, it came to the moment for plunging in, everything was forgotten, except the one fact that I must now endeavour to outdo my own powers, and swim as I

had never swum before. Carefully, therefore, and with all attention to form, I went on. Not a word was said to me, and as I rounded the second pole I began to fear that my performance was so bad as not to be worth bestowing any words upon. But, at last, something did come as I was getting near the steps.

“Turn round towards the punt, and get into the middle of the stream.”

My case then was not yet hopeless. But though the words gave me encouragement in this way, they also brought trouble and discomfort with them. My breath was already nearly all gone, and I felt that even were it possible for me to swim the distance they now expected, still I should make such an exhibition of myself by my panting and struggling, as would cause the passing masters to reject me, on the ground of my inability to keep up for any distance. To give up without trying what they asked would be folly, but I really felt as I went on that each stroke would be my last ; and when, at length, I got to the steps, and sat down exhausted on the bottom of them, I felt sure that I should have to go through the same trial next week, if not for many weeks after it.

“Hallo,” cried a voice from the top, “come up and get dressed ; it will be all over presently.”

This was Farrant minor, who had come up with Carron in a boat to see what was going on, and having spied me at the bottom of the steps, wanted to hear how I had been getting on.

“Well, we are come to take you down in our boat,” said he, as I reached the top of the bank.

“But I have not passed,” I said, sorrowfully. “I can’t have.”

"Why not? What happened? Did they tell you so?"

"No, but I was so done, they must have seen it."

"Yes," said a bystander, "I don't think you could have gone on much longer."

"Never mind; wait and see," said Farrant, "and we'll wait with our boat."

I dressed, and thought as I did so whether I should walk back to my dame's across the fields; but then the fact that friends were still waiting for me encouraged me to remain; but it was with no hopeful feelings that when all was over I formed one of the crowd who collected round the senior master to hear him read out who had passed.

"Silence," he cried, as he stood with pocket-book in hand. "We pass Jones, Moore, Trevor, Martin, Norton——"

This was all I heard, the rest of the names I never listened for. It was enough that my own was among the successful ones, and I rushed off to Martin, who was still at a distance, not having yet finished dressing.

"We've both passed," I shouted.

"Well, I thought so."

"So did I," said Farrant, coming up. "Now then, Norton, our boat is out there."

"But Martin and I are going together."

"Well, there's room for both of you. One may lie in the bows."

Just then the masters passed by on their way home.

"Norton," said one of them, "I have got something to say to you."

"Yes, sir," said I, touching my hat most respectfully to the man who had passed me.

"I don't think you could swim very far if you were put to it," he said. "You must go on practising. We passed you this afternoon because of your form, and that ought to enable you to gain powers of endurance."

I touched my hat again as he walked away, and then ran after Martin and the rest who had gone to the boat. There was room for all of us, and I took the steerage strings, and proceeded to guide them round the turnings on our way to Upper Hope. Then when we were in the open river I felt a superior being to what I had hitherto been, and the quiet motion over the water brought a feeling of pleasure which none but those Eton boys who have experienced it can appreciate.

"Well," said Carron, as we got out at the raft, "I vote we go and eat ices."

"Very good," said I ; and without waiting to be prompted by him, proposed that I should pay for them. I was too happy to let anything ruffle me in the smallest way, and so was Martin also ; so on our way down town we stopped and refreshed ourselves, the expenses being paid by the two who had so recently passed.

"Who passed this afternoon ?" said Seymour, as he came into the room that evening, where his fags were waiting. "Did you, Norton ?"

"Yes."

"Very well ; then you may be excused fagging to-night and to-morrow."

Thus everybody seemed to consider it a matter for the warmest congratulations ; and as for myself, it may safely be said that of all the boys who went to bed that night at my dame's, none could have been happier than I was.

CHAPTER VII.

FOURTH OF JUNE.

“ How merry wi’ the cider cup,
We kept the *royal* be’thday up.”

Barnes.

IF there is one day which is celebrated more than another in the Eton calendar, that day is the 4th of June. It comes at a joyous season of the year ; at a time when amusements are at their height, and school-work, perhaps, at its ebb. It is joyous, too, in the number of strangers which it attracts, the gay dresses and gay faces which it collects. There are to be seen parents who have come down to see their boys, and by their presence, especially if there be females among them, diversify the monotony of the crowd of black jackets which usually throng the street. Old Etonians, too, make this an occasion for revisiting the scene of their boyhood ; and with them, perhaps, come strangers, who have no ties to bind them to the school, but who still desire to make the acquaintance of a place of which they have heard so much. There is always, then, a crowd on such a day, there is always the appearance of life and enjoyment ; and even the masters, who may have been accustomed to it for innumerable years, seem to catch the spirit of rejoicing, and to be as eager to devote them-

selves to the amusements of the hour as any of their juvenile pupils.

Of course I had heard a great deal about all that went on among the boys on such a day, but I had never been present at it, though I might have been as a visitor ; and, therefore, as my first 4th of June drew near, all the excitement which belongs to the knowledge of a coming pleasure took hold of me. It was nothing to me why that particular day was so kept. All that I knew and cared for was that it was a whole holiday ; and I doubt if even now it would not puzzle many Fourth Form if they were asked why the 4th of June was selected for an annual demonstration. They would know nothing of the good old king * whose fondness for Eton was so proverbial, and whose birthday is still celebrated there, in gratitude for his kindness bestowed upon her sons ; they would only know, like myself, that it was a day of pleasure, and that they were meant to enjoy it.

With a full determination to do this I went to bed on the eve of our festival, and rose the next morning with my intention not one bit abated.

“ What a blessing it is to get half an hour extra this morning,” said Martin, as we dressed. “ That comes of having chapel instead of school.”

“ We shall be late in spite of your extra half-hour, if you don’t look sharp,” I said ; for just then the bell began to ring, which warned us that we had only ten minutes more, and Martin was still very behindhand in his toilet.

But he got on quicker than I expected, and when the bell stopped, which it always did five minutes before the hour, we were both ready to go down into the street.

* George III.

Outside the chapel door were already congregated a number of boys, quietly conversing together in different knots until the time should come for them to go into chapel. The bell, as I have already said, always stopped five minutes before the hour, but the Provost and Fellows never made their appearance till just as the clock struck ; and it seemed to be the object of all the bigger boys in the school to come in as nearly as possible at the same time as they did, yet without driving it so fine as to cause a disagreeable rush at the last moment. These loiterers were always the "swells" of the school, and this morning they were, if anything, later than usual when they took their places, so that close upon their heels followed the Sixth Form boys, who always headed the procession, which was closed by the Provost. His entry was the signal for the commencement of the service, and the conduct or chaplain whose turn it was at once began. Everything was got through at a great pace—too great, indeed, as many people remark with reference to our services—and in little more than a quarter of an hour we were outside the same door which we had entered so short a time before. But during our absence others had come and taken up their place there. Itinerant blackguards, the "cads" that subsist on every school, had all provided themselves with baskets of flowers, which they were retailing at exorbitant prices. No one could appear on such a day as the 4th of June without a rosebud or a geranium in his buttonhole, and few would neglect to decorate their room with bouquets for the chance of visitors appearing ; and so it came to pass that the contents of basket after basket were exhausted, and the pockets of their owners proportionately replenished.

Both Martin and myself made large purchases, and each of us was preparing to carry our share to my dame's, when I was suddenly interrupted, and compelled to leave the double quantity to him alone. Not far from us was another basket, at which one of the bigger boys had been deeply engaged for some time, and a pile of flowers was lying on the wall, which seemed evidently destined to become his property.

"You are a Lower boy, are you not?" he said, looking up suddenly and turning to me.

"Yes," I answered, somewhat disgusted, for I knew what was coming.

"Very well; then take these flowers to Wilson's room at Vidal's."

There was no choice, so telling Martin to take care of our joint stock, I went off. Luckily it was not far to go, and running back to my dame's as hard as I could, I arrived almost as soon as he did. Our little room looked quite gay when the chimneypiece, the table, and the window-sill had all received their decorations; and we almost began to wish that friends had been coming down, if it were only that they might see our adornments. We were comforted, however, by the knowledge that there were sure to be numberless inquisitive people about the house, who would delight in putting their heads into every room, and so our attempt at display would not be altogether wasted.

"How many people have you got coming down to-day?" said Brown to Farrant, as we sat at breakfast that morning.

"Why, let me see; there's the governor and the mum and three sisters; that's five of them, isn't it?"

"Well, you'll have enough to do looking after them. I suppose they will go to speeches."

"Yes, thank heaven, they have all got tickets, so we shall get rid of them for a couple of hours at least."

"What are you going to do, major, while they are in there?" asked Farrant minor.

"I don't know ; boating is not allowed any time to-day. Perhaps I shall go and bathe at Athens."

"Well, I shall go and see how the fireworks are getting on down by the raft. You'll come too, Norton, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll come, as soon as I get out of upper school. How long do they keep us there?"

"Why all Lower boys have to go into Upper school soon after eleven, and they wait there till the Provost and all the other great people have come in. But the moment the first speech is begun all who like may come away."

"Well, that's when I shall come away. But where shall I find you?"

"Oh, I don't know ; suppose we meet here."

"Very well ;" and so the matter was settled.

Between breakfast and eleven o'clock the time was spent in loitering about the streets, looking at the people who passed by, and watching for any faces one knew. At eleven o'clock all were shut in within the school-gate, and there was absence under the colonnade ; but till that time everybody seemed to congregate about the wall, and amuse themselves in speculating as to who the passers-by might be. It was decidedly a pleasant sight to see so many young fellows together, all looking as well dressed and as gentleman-like as possible ; and there

must have been many among the visitors who thought with pleasure of the time when they formed part of a like crowd.

"I say, Norton, you have not seen any of my people, have you?" said Carron, coming up hurriedly and looking around him all the time.

"No, I have not."

"It's a great bore; they told me they were coming for speeches, and it's close upon eleven now, so we shall get shut out if they don't come quickly."

"Well, I am glad that I have got no people coming."

"Yes, I must go and look about for them now somewhere else."

"What was Carron asking about?" said Darrell, who came up as the other left me. This was the boy whom Spankey had told me about as being my tutor's pupil, and since then we had made acquaintance in pupil room, and become very tolerable friends.

"Why, he was asking about his people. You haven't seen them, I suppose?"

"I shouldn't know them at all events if I did," he answered. "I say, look at all these people coming along. What a lot of them."

"Some of them are Farrant's party, I know."

"What, Farrant of your dame's?"

"Yes."

"But who are the rest, for they can't all belong to him?"

"I don't know. Go and ask Spankey, there he is."

"I will. I say, Spankey," shouted he from where we stood, and then dropping his voice as we gradually approached him—"I say, who are all those people?"

"Yes, my lord ; that is General Kaye, my lord, and his daughters, the Miss Kayes. With them are the Miss Farrants, my lord ; yes, my lord, those there, whom you sir, Mr. Norton, know. Yes sir, those are them, sir."

"Well, and who is that old man with the grey hair, coming after them ?" said I.

"That, sir, is Sir Edward Monck, the member for Brinkworth, sir."

"I suppose you know every soul here, Spankey," said Darrell. "Isn't it you who always sends up the list of fashionable company to the papers ?"

"Yes, my lord, it is ; they always ask me to give the names of those who have been here, my lord."

"But how do you get to know them all ? Oh, I say, Norton," he broke off as the clock struck, "that's eleven ; come on into the school-yard."

Everybody seemed to be collected under the colonnade as we came in ; the left-hand side, however, was reserved more especially for the passage of visitors, who all went past the Doctor's chambers, and then swept up through the flogging-room into the upper school. To the right were the masters of all the different divisions, just about to begin calling over their respective boys. For me there was no hurry, since as a new boy I came quite at the bottom of Mr. Brougham's list ; but Darrell happened to be among the first of his own lot, so he rushed away in the greatest haste to some distant corner, and left me to look about until my own turn came.

As each boy answered to his name, he was motioned towards the staircase which led into the upper school. The consequence was that there was a continuous stream flowing thither of which I soon formed a part, and even-

tually arrived at the door which opened into the great room. Across the centre was placed a sort of temporary barrier formed of green baize ; just beyond this was an open space for the orators, with chairs for the Provost and for the chief visitors ; and beyond this again were raised seats, occupied by the promiscuous crowd of strangers who might happen to have obtained tickets for them. And now I saw why it was that all the visitors had gone in through the Doctor's room. The door at that end of the upper school was of course the only one they could avail themselves of, and at the same time it was the best, because it brought them immediately to their seats. The mass of boys on the other hand, whose places were behind the barrier, would of course enter from the opposite side ; and so the convenience of both was studied, at the same time that a general crush was prevented. On our side there had been no pretence of providing special seats, for it was known that few among us would care to stay through the whole morning. When I got in therefore I placed myself as near as possible to the narrow passage, which had been railed off down the centre of the room, and which was reserved for the procession of dignitaries who were to witness the proceedings. It was somewhat tedious waiting, but at last the head of the august file made his appearance. One by one they came in, and it seemed as if the string would never end. None of them were known to me even by sight, but that I did not care for, nor did I even wish that Spankey had been at my elbow to inform me. At last the chairs in the semicircle were all filled ; and the first of the Sixth Form left his desk and began to recite his speech, the first words of which were a signal for a general

tumult among those below the barrier. Almost every one hastened to the door, in their eagerness to be relieved from attendance at a tedious and unintelligible performance. A few perhaps remained, if they had any special interest in what was to come ; but I was not one of this minority, and faithful to my appointment with Farrant minor, I ran off to my dame's.

“ Well, here you are,” he said, as I came into the room. “ I've only just this minute come in.”

“ And how did your friends get on ? I hope they all got places.”

“ Oh, yes, they are stowed away safe enough for the rest of the morning. But come on to the Brocas.”

So off we went up town, shirked a master by the way, who seemed to have no business out on such a morning as this, and soon arrived at the Brocas. The fireworks were spread upon the grass, awaiting the time of their transport to the island, and there was every opportunity therefore for our examination of them. We lingered over wheels and mottoes, over the marvellous eight-oar that was to row in flames, and over the final device, in which the words “ Floreat Etona ” were at present only dimly decipherable. But the Curfew clock began to sound, and reminded us that our time was spent.

“ It's half-past one. We had better get down to college as quick as we can.”

We did so ; and just about Barnspool bridge Farrant met his friends, who had come out of speeches, and were walking about till absence time ; so I left him and went on. Absence and dinner followed quick upon each other, and then came the afternoon, which really did seem difficult to be got through. It was all very well for those

who had friends with them, for then there was sure to be plenty to do in going over all the "lions" of the place. The playing fields, the college hall, and the chapel could all be visited, and would afford occupation for an hour at least. Then there were early dinners going on at all the tutors' houses, as well as a great banquet in college, and everybody with friends or relations would be invited to at least one of these ; so the afternoon would not seem a bit too long for those who were thus employed. But for those boys who had nothing to do but to watch the proceedings of others, for those who were debarred of the amusements of boating and bathing without getting any equivalent for them, the day unquestionably passed somewhat tediously ; and I was not surprised to hear more than one complaint, that until six o'clock the 4th of June was the dullest day in the whole year.

But when the hour had come, a change at once took place ; the listless idling about the streets, the lounging upon the wall, all seemed to disappear, and a feeling of greater life to spread through the whole place. Carriages which had been drawn up along the streets now began to fill, and to drive off to the Brocas, some taking the road down town, but more preferring the way by Keate's Lane and through the meadows. The boys almost without exception took the town road, and each as soon as his name had been called rushed off to join the long line which extended down the street. Mixed up with the dark multitude were picturesque costumes, which I then saw for the first time, but which I knew at once to belong to the members of the boats. On ordinary occasions the various crews have only their distinctive flannel shirt, but on great days, such as 4th of June and check nights,

they wear this uniform, which contributes so much to make the procession on the water such a pretty sight.

A dark-blue jacket and trousers, the former set off with brass buttons, and hanging loose in front, so as to show the distinctive pattern of a shirt which does its own duty as well as that of a waistcoat, constitute the chief articles of dress. A straw hat with blue ribbon and badge at top, and shoes and buckles on the feet, help to render the effect more complete ; while the addition of a silk handkerchief round the neck, fastened by a ring and hanging loosely over the coloured shirt, gives a kind of easy air, while at the same time it puts the finishing touch to the whole costume. No one who has not seen the boys in such a dress can imagine how well they look. No needless finery, all simple and in good taste, and in perfect character with the faces of the wearers. May it long be preserved, if it be only to delight the eyes of those that are reminded by it of their brightest and happiest days.

The crowd which was collected on the Brocas, as the large meadow by the river-bank is called, was of a very miscellaneous kind. All the rabble of Windsor and Eton were there, and also many of the highest in the kingdom. Where the crews had to embark, a space had been railed off with hurdles, in order to be kept a little more select than the rest of the meadow, and round this were ranged the carriages which were destined eventually to convey visitors up to Surly. Till the boats started, however, there was little to do but to sit quiet and watch the crowd within the enclosure. But if the occupants of the vehicles were thus idle, the same was by no means the case with the multitude of small boys who seemed to

start out of every corner. All modesty was thrown aside, in a way that only youth and schoolboy habits could render excusable ; and the most barefaced requests for a lift were preferred to almost every owner of a carriage. Many were accommodated through the kindness of friends, or by the invitation of one of their own school-fellows, who might happen to be with his relations ; but numbers of those who got their drive were totally unconnected with the people that they were fastened upon, and some even went so far as to clamber up behind carriages, without even asking the permission. But everything was considered pardonable in boys on such a day, and the greater number that a carriage bore the merrier seemed the party in it.

Luckily for myself, I had been provided for through the kindness of Jackson's friends, who just knew me well enough to make them glad to offer me a lift, though not to have me with their party during the whole day. I could therefore look about me quietly until the start, without any uneasiness as to what was to become of me afterwards.

"When will they be off ?" I asked Brown major, who had come up to the river with me. "They are a tremendous time."

"Yes ; there are only five boats manned yet, so the three Upper ones have to come."

"Here they are, at last," said I, as the gold-laced jackets came in sight, making a contrast to the silver cord of the Lower boats.

"Oh, there's Hargrave and Taylor, too ! 'Pon my word, my dame's fellows look as well as any."

"I should think so ; and doesn't young Seymour look a swell in his cocked-hat and sword ?"

“ The steerers are the greatest swells of the lot. It’s a pity they are not bigger.”



“ Well, but if they were bigger they wouldn’t be steerers.”

“ No more they would,” he answered. “ I’ll tell you

what, they'll be off in a minute ; they are only going to take a very short turn, so I shall go off at once. Look, the band boats have got ahead already."

I saw that, and judged it prudent to get to the carriage quickly, lest I might by any accident be left behind. Jackson was already there, and so were a number of boys whom we neither of us knew, but who had implored the charity of his parents. The box seat, however, had been reserved for me, so I speedily scrambled up to it, and scarcely had I done so before the report of a gun told us that the boats were at length on their way. Carriages no longer paused, but dashed across the grass, and got on to the high road which led to Dorney. The river was entirely lost sight of, nor did we catch even a glimpse of it until we had got close to Surly.

"This is Dorney Common," said Jackson to his friends, as we passed through a gate held open by an old man, whose outstretched hat signified as much as any words could have done. "They might take us over the grass now, I should think ; it would be better than the dusty road."

"What do you suppose the boats are doing now ?" asked one of the most juvenile members of the party.

"Well, I don't know," he answered. "Perhaps they have got as far as Locks, they may be waiting there at this minute. You can't see anything of the river, I suppose, Norton, from your place ?"

"Not yet ; but I shall in a minute, when we get past these trees."

"Yes, so shall we by that time, I hope."

The trees were passed, and the river soon lay before us. We could see almost as far as Locks, and it was

evident that the boats had not yet come out of them. There was the crowd of boys who accompanied them standing motionless on the bank, and watching, as might be supposed, what was going on within the gates. Our carriage, therefore, was in ample time, and we made our way slowly towards the place where the white marquee indicated the scene of the coming festivities.

We were not positively at Surly, for Surly is merely the name of a little inn on the opposite side of the river. We were in a meadow exactly opposite to this, but which, from being so near the inn, might fairly be designated by the same name, in order to convey information as to its locality. A certain portion of the field had been mown and enclosed within hurdles. Inside these were the rows of tables intended for the refreshment of Eton boys. At the top was the tent reserved for Sixth Form and for the Eleven ; from this descended three parallel rows of open air tables, the centre one of which belonged to the boats, and was flanked on each side by the two appropriated to Fifth Form. As yet these were all unoccupied, for the rule was that none should enter the enclosure until the boats had arrived and taken their places ; and it afforded me some amusement to see the various masters, including the Doctor, acting as policemen, and endeavouring to prevent the mob from storming the fences.

At last, however, the boats arrived, and proceeded in their order to take possession of the tables allotted to them. The rest of the school followed with a rush ; the Fifth Form to make the most of their scantily provisioned tables, and the Lower boys to snap up the pickings which their superiors might throw to them. Friends

were forgotten for the instant, and boys left their relations to get what they could. Hence it came to pass that Jackson and I found ourselves still together, and resolved to conduct our operations in concert.

"It's no use going to the Fifth Form tables," he said, "they've got nothing to give away ; and see," he continued, "they are leaving them themselves."

"So they are. I say, come to the Britannia. Seymour steers that, and he'll give us some champagne."

"And there's Thompson at my tutor's in it too. He told me they had got something like six dozen. Some old fellow had promised to 'sit' their boat, and give them no end of a lot."

The boats were always better provided than the Fifth Form tables. These last had only the regulation allowance of four or six bottles, but the boats, in addition to what the school authorities gave, could always secure additional contributions among themselves ; and if they were fortunate enough to get a "sitter," he paid highly for the honour of being rowed up the river. When we got to the Britannia table, therefore, after elbowing our way through the dense crowd of boys that surrounded it, we found tumblers of liquid being dispensed in all directions.

"I say, Seymour, have you got any champagne there ?"

"Who's that ? Is that you, Norton ? Well, look here, here's the end of a bottle ; there'll be a new one presently, and then you can have some more."

I stretched out my arm to reach the glass, but before I could do so, some one else had taken it, and it had vanished into the crowd.

"What, didn't you get that ?" said Seymour, as he

looked to me for the empty glass. "Well, wait for the other bottle."

"Anybody have some claret?" shouted one of the crew, whom I did not know.

"Yes, I will," I answered; and as it did not appear to be so popular as the champagne, I got it without difficulty.

Meanwhile Jackson had been looking after himself in the same way as I had been, and both of us in the excitement of the evening had been drinking claret, champagne, and sherry, with the most egregious want of discrimination. The fact is, that boys go up there, and seem to consider it part of the amusement to drink all that is offered them. It would not be the 4th of June in their eyes, did they not do so. The consequence is, that what with the horrible mixtures they make for themselves, and the heat and excitement they are in, it is not wonderful that some of them should lose their senses, and become reduced to a helpless state of intoxication. Neither Jackson nor myself were as bad as this, but many of the crowd in which we were already showed symptoms of conviviality, which made prudent people avoid their company.

"Look at Trevor, there," said Jackson, directing my attention to one of our friends who was decidedly uproarious.

"He'll be drunk, as sure as possible, to-night. There goes another glass of champagne."

"And some cherry tart now at top," said Jackson; and, after a pause, "and now a glass of beer to wash everything down."

Luckily for Trevor and for others in his condition,

the time came for the boats to go down again. All distributions of wine now came to an end. The final toasts were proposed, and received with the usual cheering by each crew ; and then, in their order, they all left the enclosure. First came the Monarch, then the Victory and the Prince of Wales, these three constituting the Upper boats, and then followed the silver-laced jackets, ending with the crew of the St. George.

Most of those on the bank had already got a good way towards Locks, before the procession started again. If the walkers intended to be in time for the fireworks, it was necessary that they should have some start ; but those who were going back in carriages might delay much longer. Hence it was that we saw the last of the boats off, and watched them even half way towards Locks, before we started to return the way we had come. It was still very light, being only about eight o'clock, and many were the speculations hazarded on the road, as to whether it would be dark enough by the time the fireworks were to be let off. At first it scarcely seemed as if it would be, but as we went on the shades grew deeper, and by the time we reached the Brocas, most of the stars were already visible, which argued well for the artificial rivals which were soon to be exhibited.

"Where shall the carriage draw up?" asked some one, as we turned on to the grass, and made for the river bank.

"Well, we had better get as near to the towing-path as possible, so as to get a good view of the eyot."

"Here's a good place," I said, as from my elevation I spied a gap between two carriages. "If we get in here we shall see capitally."

It was really a very good place ; there was nothing

between us and the river, except the path which was kept for foot passengers, and therefore our view would not be intercepted. Nor was it far from the rafts, being close to the end of those rails which run out into the river, and are used for mooring boats to. The eyot itself therefore was scarcely fifty yards lower down the stream than we were, and all the doings on it would be distinctly seen from our carriage. It certainly was a great kindness of Father Thames to create so excellent a spot as the little island proved for our yearly celebrations. It lay scarcely a hundred yards above Windsor Bridge, so that all the populace could see it from there, and was almost directly opposite the boat-houses, which formed the head-quarters of the aquatic interest. No place indeed could have been better suited for a firework display ; it was visible from all sides, and was kept by the best of all barriers from the invasion of the crowd, added to which the reflections in the water seemed to double the effect of every piece.

“The boats are a long time coming,” I observed to my neighbour, for, in spite of leaving Surly late, we had arrived at the Brocas in very good time.

“They must be coming now though,” said Jackson. “That rocket comes from the railway bridge, and means that they are just passing it now. Look, now you see the fellows running along the bank in front.”

Every one who had come down from Surly on foot was anxious to be in time to see even the first flash of light from the island. The boats were accordingly outstripped ; and once passing the railway bridge, all hurried on to secure the best places that they could. It was not positively dark even now ; but the remnants of daylight,

though they might prove unfavourable for the fireworks, enabled us to see perfectly the crowd of boys that rushed past the carriage on their way to the rafts. All were in the same condition as regards one point, that is to say, they were all out of breath ; but some among them seemed a good deal worse than this, and though the instances on the whole were not numerous, still it was evident by the sounds which some gave vent to, and by the tender care which was lavished on these unquiet members by their friends, that the temptations of Surly had been perhaps too recklessly yielded to.

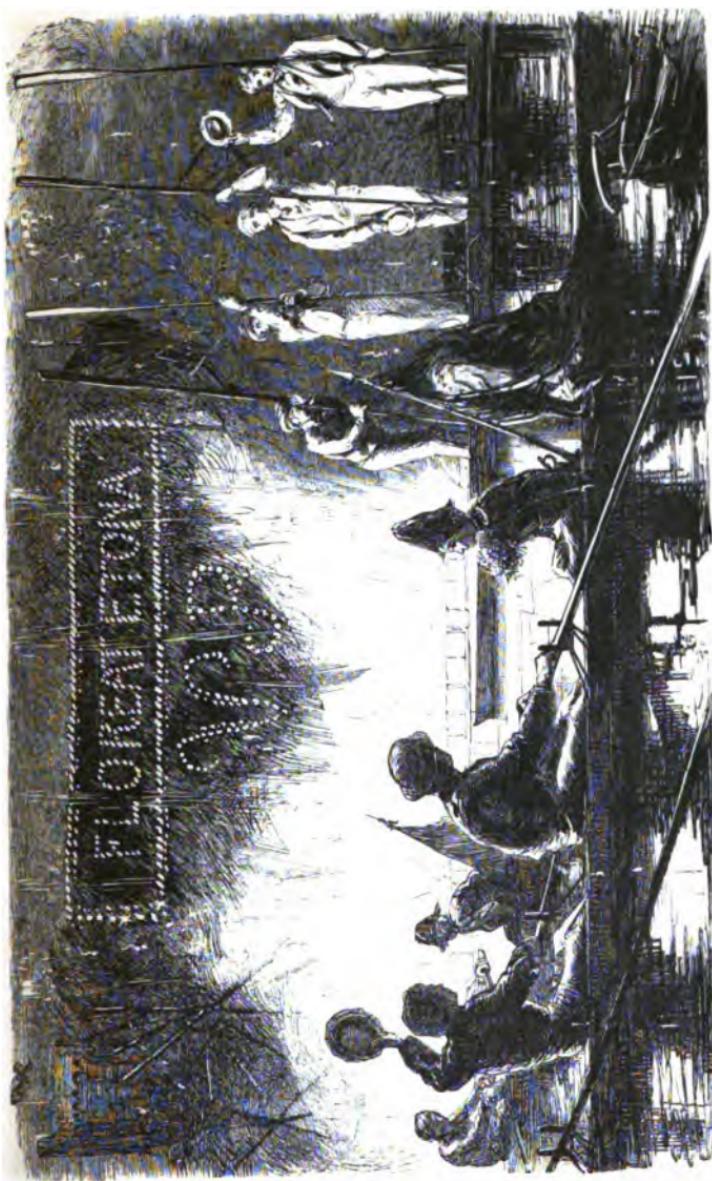
“ Hallo ! there goes a water snake,” cried a voice from the back of our carriages, as a fiery serpent hissed through the air, and fell with a shower of sparks into the water, which, so far from extinguishing it, seemed to redouble its activity. “ They must have begun now.”

“ Yes, there are some blue lights ; and see, everything along the water’s edge is being lit up ; red, green, and blue !”

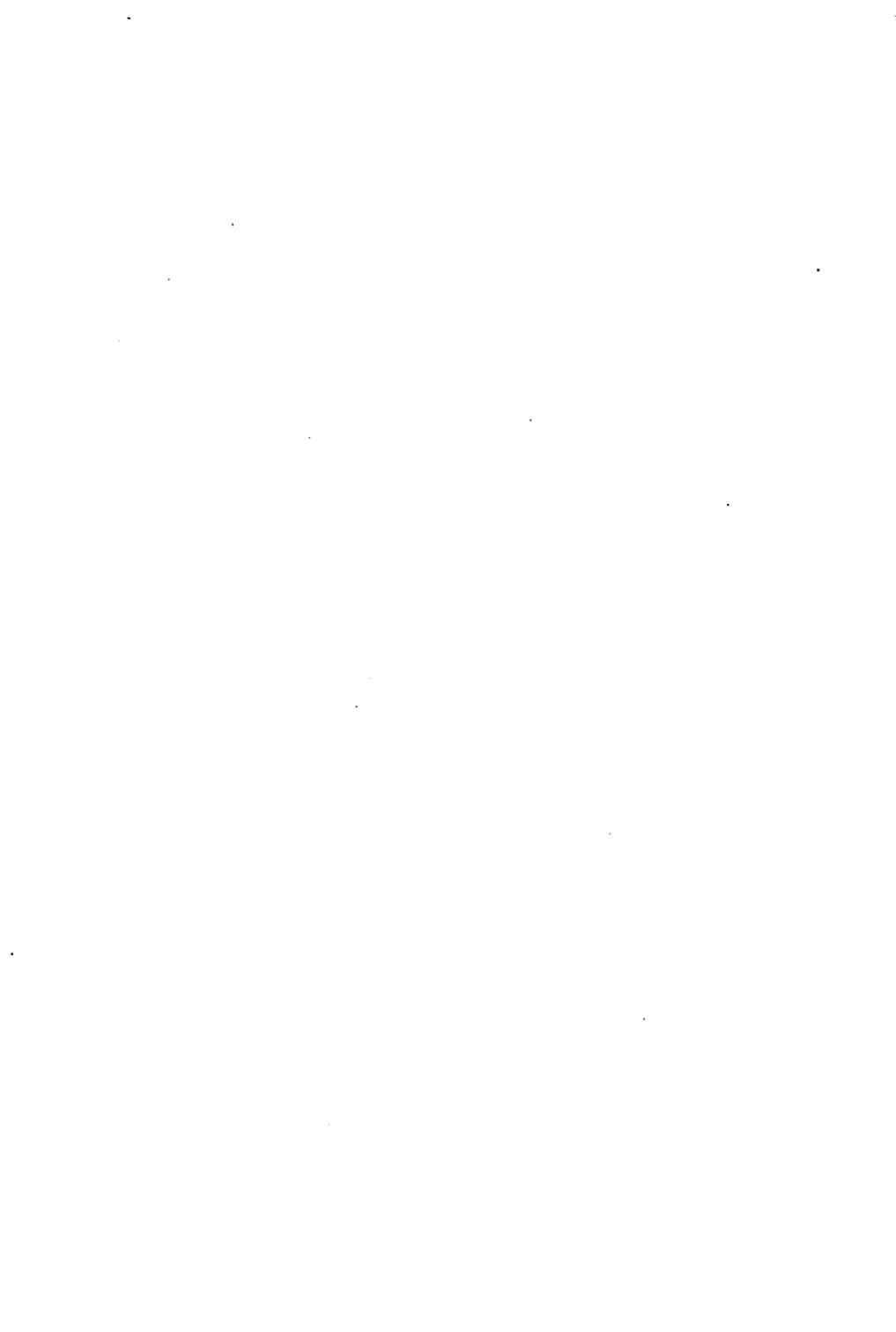
“ It really looks quite like an enchanted island,” said one of the ladies of our party. “ How dark the water seems, and how bright the many-coloured setting which surrounds the island.”

“ Oh, wait till you see the boats come past, it will be much better then. Look,” after a moment’s pause, “ here’s the first of them.”

It was indeed the first of them. The Monarch with its ten oars swept by, and as they passed in front of the island, the whole crew stood up with oars raised in the air, and waved their straw hats as they cheered both themselves and the spectators, and all those other name-



THE ISLAND.



less people and incidents which may have contributed to their hilarity on the occasion.

"Oh! How beautiful it looks! The stream carries the boat along so quietly while the boys are cheering, that it seems as if it moved by itself."

"Yes, it looks very pretty on the water," I answered. "The blue lights, the rockets, and all those blazing wheels, make it really appear something wonderful."

"But is it not very dangerous standing up in that way?" said the same voice, whose feminine instinct dreaded everything.

"Oh, no, not a bit of it; it looks as if it was very difficult; but you only want to practise it once or twice, and then you can stand up easily enough. You rest on your oar, you know, and then you can't come to any harm."

"Well, I am certain that I could not do it," observed some one.

"Oh, that's nonsense; you could if you tried. Look, there they go, one after the other; all stand up in the same way."

"It would be impossible," said Jackson, breaking in, "for fireworks to look better anywhere. That water between us and them is beautiful, and the boats passing make it perfect."

"Here they come round again," I said, as more cheers were heard, and more oars were seen in the air.

"Oh, but they won't come round twice, will they?" asked one of our non-Etonian friends.

"Half a dozen times I should think. They go on rowing round the eyot as long as the fireworks last."

And so they did. Rockets of every description con-

tinued to shoot upwards ; larger wheels and devices succeeded as others were burnt out ; and still the boats kept on round and round, like sentinels guarding the fiery shore. The shouts of the multitude of boys, from the carriages and from the bridge, mingled with the hiss of flame, and almost drowned the happy peals which the bells of the Curfew Tower rang out across the river. It was a perfect scene at once of confusion and of rejoicing, and when the last moments of it arrived, there were few who did not regret that all had come to an end. The magnificence of the last piece, the display of men and oars in flames, with the motto underneath it, left no doubt that the grand climax had arrived, and with one last cheer the expiring crew sank into darkness, and all turned to leave the shore.

“ We shall be an immense time getting through Brocas lane,” said Jackson, as our driver made towards the gate which opened into it from the meadow.

“ Yes ; I don’t know if I shall be in time for lock-up, and I have not got leave,” said I.

“ What, have they lock-up on such a night as this ?”

“ Oh, yes ; it is at some irregular time, about a quarter to ten, I believe, but they expect you to be there.”

“ Well, perhaps you had better not wait for us,” said Jackson ; “ you can get through the crowd quicker than a carriage can.”

“ That’s true. Perhaps it would be better.”

I said good-bye then at once to my friends inside, who had so kindly given me a lift throughout the day, and then proceeded to make the best of my way through the crush which filled up the narrow street. It was no easy matter to get on ; horses and carriages were in the

centre, boys and "roughs" of all sorts at the side; so I was not sorry when, after a prolonged struggle, the main street was at last gained.

One of the peculiar propensities of Eton boys is sure to manifest itself every year on this night. There seems a general rage for destruction, which finds vent in an almost universal warfare against bells and bell-handles. Every house, where some guardian was not at the door, was aroused as we proceeded down to college; and though perhaps many would have disclaimed any idea of damage to property, still each handle was rung with such good-will, that many of them remained in the ringer's hands, as though he were loth to part with them. But everything seemed to be taken by the inhabitants with good humour, and they probably reflected at the time that the 4th of June was like Christmas, and came but once a-year.

An excellent supper awaited us at my dame's, when we got in. Boys and visitors sat down promiscuously, and even those who thought they had no appetite soon found one. No law fixed the time for bed on such a night as this, so we sat on till sheer weariness compelled us to retire; and much as all may have regretted the close of such a day, still there must have been a counter sensation of pleasure at hand for most of us when the last moments for bodily exertion and consciousness had come.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISCELLANEOUS.

“ The biped woe the quadruped shall enter,
And man and beast go half and half,
As if their griefs met in a common centaur.”

Hood.

IT was not long after this that our division received a summons to attend in Upper School at a stated time, in order to hear the result of our examination given out. “Trials,” as they are called, had taken place some time before the 4th of June, and almost a week had then been occupied in writing out papers during school-hours. It was tiresome work, but we were soothed by getting off pupil room during the days thus occupied ; and the prospect of an after twelve, with no compulsory studies attached to it, rendered us more patient during the hours of confinement. The papers written by sixty boys necessarily required some amount of time before they could all be looked over and marked according to their value. All the masters shared this duty, but since their own natural work, both in and out of school, was going on at the same time without any intermission, some delay was to be expected before the result could be made known. At last, however, all was completed ; the Doctor had made a new list, assigning to each boy the place which his papers

seemed to entitle him to, and it was the "reading over" of this roll which we were called upon to listen to.

I cannot say that the proceedings were invested with any great interest for me, though at the appointed time I made one of the crowd ascending the old staircase. By the rules of the place no new boy—that is to say, no one who had not already been at least a full "half" at the school—could aspire to take rank above older members of his division. It mattered nothing that he was superior to them in talent or industry; he might, indeed, be fit to be placed at the head of all, but if he was a new comer he was inexorably kept down; he might only take rank among his contemporaries, and of these last there might only be three or four in the division.

I knew this well enough, and felt that in any case I should be uncommonly near the bottom of the form; so there was nothing to excite me, as there was in the case of those who felt that by their rise or fall their reputation was at stake. Nor was there any anxiety, on the other hand, for fear that I should miss my Remove; both Jackson and myself knew by experience that we were at least as good as three-quarters of the division we were classed with, and therefore our fate seemed to be reduced to a certainty; we could not help being promoted to a place somewhere near the bottom of the Lower Remove. Calmly and confidently, then, we listened to what was going on, and watched the eagerness of those whose places, so far from being assured to them, like our own, hung altogether in uncertainty.

The first few names were such as I did not care about at all; but soon came Farrant minor, and not much

lower down followed Carron. So my dame's had done very respectably, and it was not my fault if my own name was not mentioned till nearly the end.

"Now's your turn," said Carron, who was sitting by me, as Jackson's name was read out at the head of the new boys.

"Not yet," I answered, at the same minute. But so it was, next to Jackson came Norton, and I congratulated myself on, at all events, not being the last on the list.

"Well, but I have heard nothing of Weekes or Alston," said a neighbour.

"They can't have taken, then," said Carron; and his words, obscure as they might be to the uninitiated, signified too plainly to us that the individuals in question had probably been found unfit for advancement to a higher form.

"I should think there were half a dozen of them that have not taken. Never mind, we're all right, so come along."

Down the stairs and into the school-yard was the work of an instant, and there almost the first person we stumbled across was one of those whose fate we had been lamenting.

"Hallo, Alston," cried Farrant, who had joined us, "were you up-stairs?"

"No," he said, with a laugh; "but I know I haven't taken. I don't care a bit, though; I sha'n't have such hard work as you fellows."

"I say, I'll tell you what it is," said my former neighbour. "All your swishings have had something to do with this."

"Perhaps ; but I haven't been swished very often," and he laughed again.

"Oh, no, we'll suppose not. Only three times a day."

"Well, but that only happened once."

"Quite often enough to stop your taking."

Alston's case had really been an unparalleled one at Eton. In one week he had been flogged perhaps oftener than any other boy in the school had been during his whole career, and yet he was not of a bad disposition, and would never have committed any of the atrocities which some boys indulge in. As a rule, he was decidedly popular—an Irishman with plenty to say for himself, and a constant laugh which nothing could get rid of ; but the same island blood had given him a warmth of temper and an obstinacy which had been the secret of his getting into trouble.

"What was Alston's history which those fellows were laughing about ?" said I to Carron, as we left the school-yard.

"Why, it happened last half," he answered, "before you came. He got a *pœna* for coming in late for morning school one day ; but as he thought he had been unfairly treated, he determined not to do it, so he was flogged."

"Well, but I thought they said he had been flogged three times ?"

"So he was. At eleven o'clock Brougham asked for his punishment. 'Not done it, sir,' was the answer. 'I shall complain of you then.' The same thing at three ; still not done. 'Shall complain of you again,' but Alston only laughed as he does now. So you see he was swished twice before five o'clock school came. Then

it was the same question over again, and the same answer ; so there were three swishings for him in one day, and there might have been four, only there was no other school at which his pena could be asked for."

" And what happened after all ; did he do it ?"

" There's the worst part of it ; he gave in at last. He didn't care a bit for the number of cuts he got, but the third time that he presented himself before the Doctor, all sorts of threats were held out to him if he had to make another visit next day ; so he judged it prudent to do the pena after all, and show it up next morning."

" It was a great shame making him do it after he had been flogged ; one flogging ought to have been enough instead of it."

" So all our division thought ; but Brougham didn't, and all the masters have looked on Alston as a black sheep ever since. I expect they have kept him down now because of all that."

" What a shame if they have."

" Hallo, Norton," shouted Martin, who rushed almost into our arms, as we turned the corner of Keate's Lane. " So you are all right, though at the bottom of the list."

" Yes, I am all right ; no more trials for another year."

" How jolly ! Fancy, you know, mine are coming off next half. I wish they were all over, like yours."

" So do I. Never mind, we are as good as in the same division now ; we shall do the same work."

" Yes, and I'll lend you my crib for '*Poetæ*,' it's uncommonly hard stuff, I can tell you."

" That's all right. By-the-bye, what are you going to do now ? I want to go up town and order something at Fisher's."

"Very well, I'll come too. It's something to do."

Off we started, not sorry to have an excuse for paying a visit to the place in question. The shop which was popularly known as Fisher's, from the name of the proprietor, was devoted to objects which might be supposed to illustrate natural history, but not unfrequently the most unnatural wonders were to be found there. Every monster which the neighbourhood could produce, from a white peacock to a six-legged kitten, was sure to find itself eventually transferred to this abode ; and neither father nor son lost any opportunity of attracting visitors, who might increase the income as well as extend the credit of the house. Of course, such marvels were not always to be seen. They came by chance, but perhaps for that very reason they were more eagerly looked for. At all times, however, there were sufficient objects to attract the curiosity of small Eton boys, and it was seldom that one could pass the door without seeing two or three figures loitering within it. Now, from my earliest years I had always been fond of animals, and had indulged in nursery pets almost as soon as I had been allowed, and such youthful predilections had not at all diminished in me since I came to Eton. Fisher's was at once found out, and I became one of his most constant visitors. The place was filthy, it is true ; but that boys do not mind ; and as for the various odours which were perceptible, since a little stretch of imagination might attribute them all to the dogs or birds which were about, they lost a good deal of their obnoxiousness, and were regarded, at all events, with toleration, if not with positive favour. Then there was something delightful in the contemplation of the miser-

able specimens of stuffed birds which were ranged on rickety shelves along the walls. The box of eggs, too, which lay on the board which represented a counter, was always carefully examined. There you might find a cuckoo's egg, which had been taken only yesterday from a hedge-sparrow's nest near Chalvey, or a bearded tit which had come from Englefield Green. And if by any good fortune you could obtain admittance to the back-yard, and see the bantams and the Cochin Chinas—which, if possible, were more offensive even than the collection in the front shop—then the Eton boy's heart was won, and he became for the next half-hour an unsuspecting victim to all the stories and many of the demands which were made upon him by the guardian of the place.

"I say, Fisher, I want to know if you have got any silkworms yet," said I, as we entered the shop.

"Yes, here they are; you may look at them," was the reply, given as unceremoniously as though we had been his next-door neighbours; and we were left to examine a wretched little paper tray, on which were some old lettuces, which formed the food of an infinity of small grubs.

"But these won't spin," I shouted.

"Not to-morrow, they won't, if you mean that, any more than you will; but they will in about six weeks."

"Oh, I shan't have any then. I say, what's this white bird lying here?"

"That's a blackbird."

"Nonsense; what is it?"

"It is a blackbird, I tell you; only it's so old that it has grown white."

I believe it really was one, for though such varieties among the feathered tribes are uncommon, they are not altogether unknown. So I remained content with the information which I had extracted, knowing that at all events, whether it were true or false, I should not get further enlightenment.

"Come along," said Martin, "the place stinks, and there are no silkworms to be got. Come on."

"Very good, but I don't know what we are to do now."

"Never mind, we'll go up town. Look, here comes Brown minor, with a pile of things on his arm. I suppose he has been up to the raft."

"I say, what have you got there?" we shouted, as he came towards us.

"Why, I have been to fetch my major's things from his locker. He wants them down at my dame's."

"I wish I had a locker," was my reflection, as we passed on.

"Come on to the raft, Martin, and let's ask if we can't manage something for our things, so as to do instead of a locker for the rest of this half."

There were a certain number of rooms at each boat-builder's which were set apart for the use of the boys, and small compartments were fitted up all round them, each of which had a lock and key, and became private property for the time being of the owner to whom it was allotted. Every boy who had a boat was naturally in want of some place in which he might keep his boating things—his flannel shirt and his particular pair of trousers, which were reserved in order to form his river dress. All who could, obtained, therefore, for a

consideration, the use of one of these lockers ; but as there were not a very great number of them, it generally happened that they were all taken at the beginning of the summer, and so those who did not "pass" till later had to shift as they could, and change their dress in all sorts of out-of-the-way corners. It was a great annoyance to those who had no fixed place, and no safe deposit where they could leave their clothes, and Martin and myself were this summer among the sufferers. My proposition, therefore, to make another attempt at some better arrangement was eagerly received by him, and we made for the raft at once.

Of the three different establishments, we had chosen to patronize Goodman's. Tolladay's and Searle's both seemed to us less comfortable, and perhaps not so well managed as to order and cleanliness. Goodman himself, too, we preferred to any of the others ; there seemed more willingness in him to oblige, and to do what he could for us ; not that the others might not have been equally willing, but from not knowing so much of them we were unable to pronounce so decidedly in their favour.

"Well, Harry, we want to know if it's really impossible to manage anything for us about changing."

"I really haven't got a corner, sir ; I wish I had."

"Oh, but do find one. As it is, if we are fortunate we get a seat on the table, and our clothes are shoved under it ; but if there's a crowd, we change in the passage."

"Well, I'll try."

"Do ; we only want one between us two."

"Look here, sir, I'll tell you what you may do if you like."

"What ?"

"There's Mr. Scott, who's ill and has gone home. Perhaps he won't come back this half ; at all events you may have his locker till he comes."

"Hurrah, that's all right. You're a brick, Harry."

"But you must give it up if he comes back."

"Yes, yes," we both shouted, "of course we will. Where is it?"

"It's in the far corner of No. 2 room. Its own number is 26."

"All right, we'll find it out. Thanks."

"That's capital, isn't it?" said I, as we walked down town.

"It's stunning," said Martin. "Upon my word I like Harry Goodman, he's such a good-natured fellow."

"Yes, he'll do all he can for you. I'm awfully glad we have got it."

CHAPTER IX.

A RACE.

“ Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships.”
Tennyson.

“ And amid shouts and clapping,
 And noise of * * loud,
He entered by the river gate,
 Borne by the joyous crowd.”

Macaulay.

AFTER the 4th of June, when lock-up was not till a quarter to nine, the real boating season commenced. Of course it had been allowed long before, and some races even had been rowed ; but now was the time when the aquatic calendar required most frequently to be consulted, for there was a race set down in it for almost every other night up to the end of the half. It seemed wonderful at first how such a multitude of them could ever have been devised ; but when they were carefully gone over, and it was seen that the numbers were made up by a mixture of sculling, pulling, and eight-oared races, the astonishment lessened. And when it was further seen that many of these required two or three heats, and would consequently extend perhaps over the same number of nights, there appeared none too many, short as might be the time within which they were all to be accomplished.

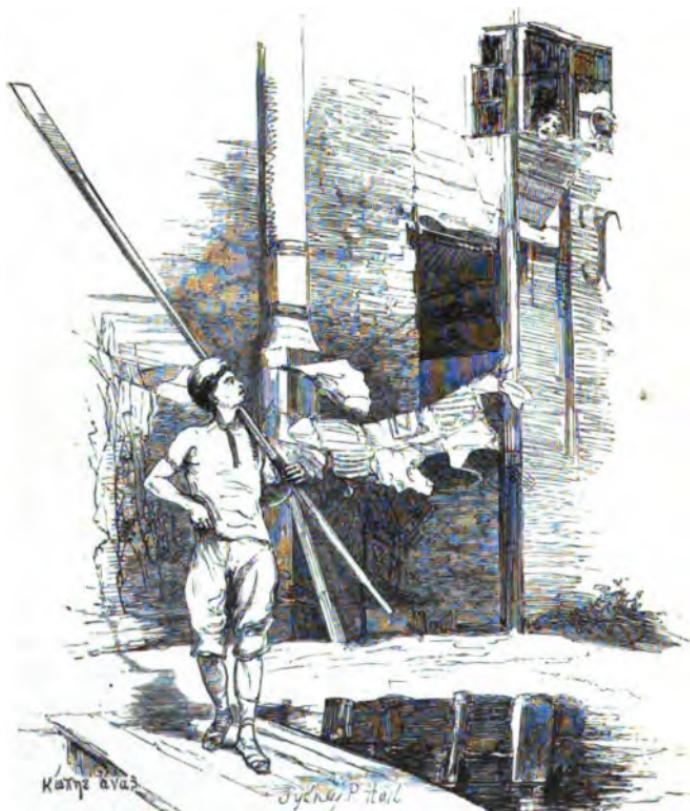
Every struggle which took place on the river was

always fixed to the one period of "after six," that is to say, the time between six o'clock and lock-up. It certainly was the pleasantest time of the day during the summer months ; the sun, which was so soon to disappear, had entirely lost its heat before the crowds began to assemble, and the cool breeze from the water seemed to freshen up and give new energy to all. There is certainly nothing so enjoyable as one of those still summer evenings spent in quiet by the water side, or in gently gliding over its surface. The calmness of the air, the mellowed light, and the ripple of the stream, give a tranquillity, and seem to invite especially to the peaceful contemplation of any labours that are not one's own.

Some nights there were when no small boats were allowed upon the river at all. The Captain of the Boats issued his edict, and then the course was left entirely clear for the race. None dared to violate the order, and the boat-builders would all have refused to put a craft of any sort into the water. The Captain of the Boats, indeed, was such a personage in the Eton world, that no one except his closest intimates would have thought of disputing what he said, whether it was right or wrong. His position seemed to place him above every one, and he was looked up to by the whole school as the leading character in it. All paid him some deference, and Lower boys especially almost worshipped him ; they looked upon him as a being of a superior nature, and turned to gaze with admiration as he passed.

If any sign were required as to which was the favourite pursuit of the boys, what occupation met with the greatest amount of popularity, and what pre-eminence secured the largest share of admiration, it would only be necessary

to refer for a moment, and glance at the position which the acknowledged heads of different classes hold among their associates. If any pursuit in itself be unpopular,



it will never be found that boys can applaud a devotion to that pursuit. Success indeed in anything, however humble, may be commended for its own sake, but the

appreciation of it will be as nothing compared to the praise and the admiration which will be lavished on excellence in a higher sphere. When we say then that the Captain of the Boats held the first rank in the Eton world, and that he did so merely perhaps from his public position, and not at all from his private qualities, it may fairly be supposed that the pursuit to which he had devoted himself, and to which he owed much of his pre-eminence, was the most popular of those at Eton. He had enrolled himself as one of the highest class on his entry into the boats, and he had risen to the top of that highest class. The Captain of the School, the head of the Sixth Form, the highest as he was supposed to be in general learning, was nobody ; none scarcely regarded him, and I am sure none felt any curiosity to make him out by sight. The Captain of the Eleven, who might perhaps be thought to rival the Chief of the Boats, fell infinitely below him in popular estimation. Higher undoubtedly he was than the Head of the School, but still he could never command more than a moderate share of attention. In his own circle he was great, but that circle after all was a narrow one, and beyond it he never found that wild admiration which was so universally met with by his rival. The fact was that school-work was evidently at a discount ; cricket favoured only by a minority ; while the general interests of the school were centred on the river and on the triumphs to be gained upon it.

It was on a night when one of these triumphs was to be lost and won, that Waller and myself determined to see the finish from our boat. He was still as hardworked as ever by his master, but it was settled, that as soon as his fagging was over, and we had each got our tea, we

should start for the Brocas. Ever since the first lesson which he had given me in making toast, we had been excellent friends. I had not seen so much perhaps of him as of Farrant and Carron, because he was two divisions below me, but his liveliness and readiness to do anything rendered him a general favourite at my dame's, and it was impossible not to like him.

I thought myself fortunate then in such a companion as we walked down town towards the river. Everybody seemed to be going in the same direction ; the whole school had flocked out as soon as tea was over, and were going down in one great crowd to see the race, just as if it was the first occasion of such a contest, and not merely one of the ordinary race nights, which would come round perhaps three times a week till the end of the summer, and of which there had already been several before the present. Certainly nothing can show the devotion of the boys to the river so much as the perseverance with which they go on coming down night after night to see precisely the same thing, and yet always finding precisely the same amount of enjoyment.

“ What are you going to do about changing ? ” I said to Waller, as we turned into Goodman's.

“ Oh, I shan't change at all,” he answered. “ We'll only paddle about, we won't exert ourselves. I'll put on a boating jacket, though.”

“ Very well, and I'll get some cushions to put into the stern. By-the-bye, what shall we have, a gig or a skiff ? ”

“ Oh, a gig, certainly ; why there ain't room for two to lie at the bottom of the skiff, and I don't suppose either of us would care to do the whole of the work—sculling.”

“ Then we shall want a steerer.”

"Sure to be some one on the raft. Get the cushions, and I'll get my coat."

We met on the raft, and the cushions were ready in the gig, which I had just got pushed into the water. It was a good broad boat, and seemed warranted to carry a certain number. But it did not matter much how heavy it was, as we were only going a short distance, and then intended to lie down under the bank and wait for the race. The broader the bottom, therefore, the better would our cushions lie, and the more comfortable would their occupants be.

"We haven't got a steerer now," I said, as Waller jumped down the rough steps from the house on to the raft. "What are we to do?"

"Pick up anybody there is. Lots of my dame's fellows are sure to be about."

"There's Dyke; will he do?"

"Oh, he's a fool, but never mind, better than nobody. I say, Dyke," he shouted, "will you come and cox us?" —cox being the somewhat abbreviated verb formed by the boys from coxswain, and therefore signifying, as a dictionary would interpret it, *to steer*.

"How far are you going?" replied the individual.

"Only going to paddle about. Shan't get further than Railway Bridge."

"Very well then; we must get in so as to be in time for eight o'clock absence."

"Oh yes, of course; don't be in a funk."

It was the same Dyke now with us whose simplicity in the first days of his Eton life had amused every one so much. Since that time, short as his school life had been, he had necessarily picked up a considerable amount

of general knowledge, and the jokes played upon him had proportionately diminished. He was still, however, a peculiarly mild and simple being, with a wholesome but somewhat ridiculous dread of getting into any scrape with the authorities, and renowned for the care which he bestowed on appearing punctually to the moment at each absence when his name was to be called over. He managed to steer us however well enough, and we made at once for the other side of the river, where we hoped to be able to moor our boat under the willows, and lie in quiet till the crowd on the bank or the race itself should come in sight.

It was not a contest of any very great interest which we were to witness, and only two boats were engaged in it. The occasional edict therefore which would have prevented our own appearance on the river was not in force to-night, it being thought that two "eights" might well find room for themselves on the stream, and that no small craft would be rash enough to get in their way, knowing that they would thus run a fair chance of being sunk utterly. Under its technical name, what we were to be spectators of was Lower Eights. Two crews were chosen exclusively from the Lower boats, and the race between them was more for the sake of the practice it afforded and for bringing out promising young oars, than for any triumph or glory which might be attained by the victors. Still everybody came down to see it, and numberless parties like our own were pushing off from the raft in every direction as we got under weigh.

"I don't care about running down with such a race as this," said Waller, as we fastened ourselves under the bank ; "it's much jollier staying in the cool here."

"Yes, you get so awfully hot running down all the way

with them from Rushes, and they go at such a pace down stream."

"I never run all the way," said Dyke, "for I like to be able to get to the raft in good time, so as to secure a place for the finish."

"Well, we shall none of us run any part of the way to-day."

"I say, Norton," said Waller, after a pause, "what a night last night was! Were you in that enormous crowd that ran along the bank?"

"Yes, I was. I came all the way."

It had been the last night of the pulling, in which the four best pairs out of the two preceding heats had started together. Every one almost had witnessed the race, and all who did so had been of necessity on the bank, since it was always one of the forbidden nights for smaller boats. There was an immense excitement attached to such a race, since it seemed almost to determine who were the two best oars in the school; whereas an eight-oar race could of course bring no such distinction with it. All of us therefore had been eager to see as much of it as we could, and hence the reason for Waller's question about the enormous crowd.

"What!" he continued, "you don't mean to say that you ran the whole distance?"

"Very nearly. I saw them all the way. But I'll tell you what it was. I got as far as Upper Hope, and then of course I could see up the bend of the river as far as Rushes; so I waited for a bit till they came near, and then ran down from there."

"I suppose Rushes is about three quarters of a mile above Upper Hope; so you were saved a good bit."

"Yes, I suppose they are ; and then it takes a long time for a boat to round those two corners at Upper and Lower Hope, while people on the bank can cut across the grass."

"I only got as far as Brocas Clump," said Dyke. "I was afraid of the squash."

"Well, it was an awful crush, the more so you know because it was such a close race."

"Hawkes and Rearden were close together the whole way, weren't they ?" asked Waller.

"They went neck and neck as far as Bargeman's, but there Hawkes began to draw ahead a bit ; he was passed again, however, between the Hopes, but still neither was far from the other up to Rushes."

"Yes, it's no use going further than Upper Hope to see a race. One can keep them in sight well from there, with the exception of the actual turn behind Rushes, and the loss of that is made up for by the breathing time one gains."

"Were they close together still coming down ?" asked Dyke.

"Yes, pretty well ; not so near as they were, though. Rearden was increasing his lead gradually, but still they were so close, that all those who were running on the bank kept in one lump, as it were, by their side, eager to see how each got on. One lost one's power of free action altogether, and had to move as the crowd did, so closely were you squeezed within it. Luckily, as the distance between the two boats increased, we all became more scattered ; those who were for Hawkes staying behind, while the others ran on in front, to shout for Rearden as he passed the raft."

"He won by about half a minute, I think?" said Waller.

"I believe so; some one told me they had timed it. But I say, when do you suppose to-night's boats will come down?"

"They are a long time," observed our steerer. "I vote we move about a bit."

"Well, I've no objection. We'll go and see what those fellows are doing on the other bank."

"Who are they?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know; there's Trevor there, splashing about as if he was drunk again to-night. And there's Alston, I see now. Come along, we'll have some fun."

Our fun however was of short duration, for scarcely had we got to our friends' side, when the sound of shouting in the distance warned us that the boats were at last coming. All the river then, near where we were, and as far as the Railway Bridge, began to show signs of commotion. The quiet paddling down the centre of the stream, or from one side to the other, was quickened into a show of active exertion. Every one seemed eager to make for the bank, so as to leave an open course free for the passage of the rival eights. Many were seen still hesitating whether there was yet time to cross from one bank to the other; others were carefully clinging to the rushes, or to the bank itself, in order to avoid being carried out by the stream; while a few yet remained undetermined as to where they should take up their position, and coasting along in search of a favourable spot, though all the while in terror lest they should be too late, and be found at the last moment blocking up the course left for the race.

Foremost among these unfortunates I descried my tutor, who was labouring along, but going somewhat slowly, in consequence of having to scull an enormous gig containing a miscellaneous party under his protection. Mr. Turner had a large family, and in the kindness of his heart he was willing to do his best for their amusement. It was no uncommon thing, therefore, on a race night to see a boatload of children with their mother, slowly working their way among the rest, under the guidance of my tutor. To-night, however, that guidance seemed to be more at fault than usual, and it was only the near prospect of his boat being stove in by the iron beak of an eight, that forced him to be content with the nearest corner of refuge. And fortunate it was that he found one, for scarce two minutes afterwards the boats came by quite close to our bank, and I am sure that if the miscellaneous boatload had been in their way, not many of the party would have been picked up.

We were in a good place on the Eton side, and by standing up could see the advancing crowd, and soon afterwards the boats themselves. At that time I thought there was about fifty yards interval between them, but as they came nearer I saw that the distance was far more considerable, and the race, as a contest for superiority, was virtually over. Still the crowd ran, still they shouted, and still the boats lining the shore seemed to catch up the eagerness as the runners passed on in their cloud of dust. In a moment they shot past us, but scarcely had the second eight done so, when the river was alive again with the small craft, which seemed to spring out of every corner, and all took the direction down stream, in order to learn the minutest particulars

about the finish, which they had been unable themselves to see.

"We must make haste down," said Dyke. "It's only five-and-twenty minutes to eight."

"Oh, there's lots of time," said Waller. "We shall be down at the raft in ten minutes, and you've nothing to change."

"Look at those fellows behind us ; they must have been up to Surly ; they'll have to change everything."

"It's Darrell and Foster," said Waller. "I say, where have you fellows been to?"

"Why, we went up to Surly, meaning to see something of the race coming back, but we were too late."

"So I see. Good-bye," he added, as they went on without slackening their pace.

"I wish we had been up to Surly, too, instead of doing nothing here and seeing a bad race."

"Oh, it's very jolly lying on the water and doing nothing. How shall we get in to the raft?"

It was indeed a question. So numberless were the small boats which were flocking towards it, that it was surrounded by them, and there was not the smallest hope of getting out direct upon its timbers. All that most of the boys seemed to be doing was jumping from one empty boat to another, and so eventually reaching land. Our time was short, so we also prepared to show the same activity, and a few moments later we emerged into the town, on our way to eight o'clock absence.

The half-hour between that and lock-up is usually spent by small boys in a general dawdle about the streets. It is too short indeed to do anything else in, and loungers may be seen in all the neighbouring shops,

who really want nothing, but who are unwilling to go to their houses one single instant before they are compelled to do so.

On the nights, however, after any of the great races have been decided, a peculiar form of ovation takes



place, which seems to plunge the whole school into a momentary madness. This is called in Eton language "Hoisting," because the subject of it is hoisted into the air on the shoulders of his supporters. It is generally the captain and steerer of the victorious boat that receive this honour, and accordingly Downes and Holland were

the two who were entitled to it after their victory in Lower Eights.

As we came away from absence all paused in the street, waiting for what was to come. Many took up their station on the "Wall," which being so low, afforded a good seat to those who did not object to dangling their legs. This I at once found out, and Waller and myself were soon kicking our heels with the rest, and drumming against the brickwork with that regular monotony which Eton boys adopt on such occasions.

Our patience was indeed tried, and it was well that we had such a harmless amusement to occupy us, for it was past half-past eight before the crowd coming down the street warned us that the hoisting would begin. All above the lower portion of Fifth Form were excused this eight o'clock absence ; and thus all the "swells" of the school, and most of the boats, could stay at the river much later than the rest. These now formed the crowd that walked arm-in-arm down the town, and among whom were of course to be found Downes and Holland. The line they formed extended right across the street, and came on steadily advancing across Barnspool Bridge. Then, almost without pausing, it broke up and became a running group, in the midst of which could be seen Downes, lying as it were on the shoulders of five or six others; who bore him along as fast as they could. Thus they ran along the road, past the college, till they came to where the road divides, when they turned and conveyed him back again to Barnspool at the same pace. A tremendous crowd had followed, cheering and shouting the whole way, and when all was over, a general drumming of knuckles on the crowns of hats followed, to testify a sort of approbation of the whole proceeding.

"I shall run with them next time," said Waller, as we walked along the street.

"Well, I shan't," I answered. "I shall stay at the top of Keate's Lane, and as soon as they have passed I shall get back to my dame's. It's just going to strike the quarter now."

At the very moment that it did so, shouting began again, which was a sign that the second progress had commenced, and soon I saw Waller flying in the crowd behind, which looked like the black tail of a comet, and was composed of numbers like himself, who rushed on, waving their hats and screaming. I waited to see them pass again, and just as they did so, it seemed almost as if all were going to be upset, steerer and all, under my eyes. One of the smallest boys, who was running madly in front, but always looking behind towards the great beings whose glory he was contributing to, happened by chance to stumble, and came down on his nose ; some one immediately behind fell over him, and this last was in his turn crushed by some one else. So it went on ; the heap of slain accumulated, and it was by the greatest chance that Holland and his bearer were not precipitated at the top of all. It certainly would have happened had he been borne, like Downes, by three or four on each side ; but being quite a little fellow, he had been taken on the shoulders of the Captain of the Boats, who ran along in the crowd holding his burden tight by the legs, and thus having no one to consult as to his motions but himself, he could at once shape his course so as to avoid obstacles. They passed, therefore, in safety, and as soon as they had done so I turned towards my dame's. Waller was not there at first, but soon came in, having lost his hat.

CHAPTER X.

THE FOOTBALL HALF.

“ Or urge the flying ball.”

Gray.

THE summer passed far more quickly than I wished it to do. It was the pleasantest time of the year, the season for all out-of-door amusements, and also, perhaps, for the least amount of work. Everybody seemed to rejoice in it ; there was always something going on, something to look at or to do, and both masters and boys seemed to consider it a privileged time. No wonder, then, that it passed quickly, for our happiest days are always the shortest, and what we gain in amount of pleasure is often neutralized by that rule of compensation which diminishes the time left for its enjoyment.

Election Saturday came and went. Its ceremonies and amusements were precisely the same as those on the 4th of June ; and when the school-time had thus been brought to a close, the holidays succeeded, and all dispersed to their respective homes. It is not necessary for our acquaintance with school-life that we should also trace the home proceedings by which it is at intervals relieved. They can have but little interest for us, and we may as well take up again at once those other events, which, however small in themselves they

be, have, at all events, familiar associations to encourage many of us to pause upon them.

When the day came on which the school was to reassemble, there was no question now as to whether I should go with the others or not. There was no choice, for I was bound by the rules of the school now that I was a regular member of it ; and accordingly, late in the evening, after having secured as much time at home as possible, I made my way to the station for the Windsor line. The platform was crowded by numberless boys of my own age, who were all evidently returning like myself to school, and among whom I recognized many faces, either as actual acquaintances, or, at all events, as having been seen before at Eton. At last I came upon a little knot all belonging to my dame's, who had just met, and were recounting to each other all the adventures of the summer. It was soon agreed that we should get into a carriage together, and as soon as this was found the whole party took possession of it, and by their numbers effectually prevented any intruder from attempting to join us. It was indeed lucky that we had been able to secure a compartment to ourselves, for the rush for places was so great, and the number of carriages so few, that it was almost a fight as to who should get into a seat and who not. Everybody had put off going back to school until the very last moment, and the consequence was that this, the latest train of all, was more crowded perhaps to-night than on any other day in the year. It is true that only a portion of the school were going back, for the Fifth Form had one day longer, and the Sixth Form even another day beyond that ; but still the number of Lower boys in the school was any-

thing but small, and these were what formed the multitudes now hurrying about in the search for seats.

At length the train started, and we were quickly carried down to Windsor, and so passed on to Eton, where, in due time, I was received by the rotund and somewhat dirty butler, who had originally had the honour of introducing me to the interior of my dame's house. Less obsequious since our familiarity had increased, he contented himself with seeing my boxes placed inside the hall, and then retired at once to his own domain, leaving both them and me to get up-stairs as best we could.

"A pretty time o' night for all you gentlemen to arrive," were the first words that met my ears as I got on to the first landing. This was the welcome accorded to us by the old maid to whose quarter of the house I belonged, and who dreaded being kept up a minute longer than the appointed time. Quite an invaluable person was this old hag, according to my dame's notion. She had lived in the house almost as long as it had existed, and had been a "boy's maid" the whole of her life. If her character for fidelity and attachment to old friends had thus been ever on the increase, her reputation for good temper had certainly not advanced at the same pace, and it would have been difficult to have found in the whole place a servant more obnoxious to the boys themselves than she had made herself. It must undoubtedly be a trying thing to have to live such a life, and much therefore in such a person may find an excuse; but nothing will ever make me believe, even now that I am out of her clutches, and can think calmly on what she was, that there was not something very materially wrong in her own natural disposition.

"Well, I don't care, Sarah," was the answer to her first observation. "We needn't be in before twelve o'clock on the first night, unless we like it."

"I knows nothing about that," retorted she; "all I knows is that I've got horders for all lights to be out at ten o'clock, and it only wants a quarter to ten now."

"Well, you won't have my light in a quarter of an hour, I can tell you that," was the general chorus.

At this moment Mrs. Seely appeared at the end of the passage, and Sarah instantly addressed herself to her.

"If you please, ma'am, would you send them young gentlemen to bed."

But Mrs. Seely did nothing of the sort. On the contrary, as we had none of us seen her before, instead of coming to reproach us, her first words were words of welcome; and she stood under the passage lamp talking quietly and good-naturedly to us for a far longer time than the irate old lady at the end of the passage approved of.

"We can't beveryhard the first night," she said, in answer to a last question, put as she was going away. "The lights may stay to-night till half-past ten. You hear that, Sarah."

And so the victory was on our side; though now that the point was gained we were all glad enough to tumble into bed as fast as we could, and drown all feelings of excitement beneath the blankets.

One of the first things done in the house, after the commencement of the autumn or Christmas half, was to get up the subscriptions for the football, which was to take the place of the boating and cricket which had lasted during the summer months. This was the one game left for the cold weather at this season of the year, and so universally was it played, and so thoroughly felt

to belong peculiarly to these autumn months, that it was much more common to hear boys speaking of the "football half" than of the Christmas one. The care and general management of the games was always left to one individual. In every house the best player was considered to be the captain of the football, and on him devolved all the arrangements for games and matches, as well as the inferior but not less troublesome business of subscriptions and accounts. As soon, therefore, as an estimate had been formed as to what the expenses were likely to be, a tax was levied on the whole house, and this formed a fund from which all the necessary payments, as for ground, balls, or beer after the games, were to be made.

Before the serious business of regular house matches could be entered upon, it was always necessary to have a certain amount of preliminary games, in order to bring out what latent talent there might be among the smaller boys, as well as to find out who had improved and who had fallen off since the last season. Every "after twelve," therefore, from the very beginning of the half, the house resounded with cries of preparation for the game that was to come. There was usually a list sent round early in the morning, in order to ascertain what number were able and willing to play; and as soon as eleven o'clock school was over, those whose names were already down began to exert themselves to the utmost in order to get as many others as possible to join them. Shouts of "change, change," rang through the house, warning everybody to equip themselves as quickly as they could in those garments which were specially devoted to the game, and which consisted usually of a flannel shirt and

a pair of trousers, as may be imagined, none of the best. Then, too, everybody, especially we Lower boys, was stopped at the door as they came in or out, and none but the most convincing excuse would avail to save them from being almost dragged down to the field, a violence, which, however obnoxious at the time, was, I am sure, in reality most beneficial, and secured a certain amount of wholesome exercise to the objects of it, instead of letting them fill their lungs with cold, and their stomachs with rubbish, as they would have done in loitering about "the wall," or passing their time in the "sock" shops.

It was about the middle of the school-time, when one of those accidents occurred, which, however rare they may be, are still of sufficient frequency to become the terror of anxious mothers whose boys may be exposed to them. I had not been playing myself, having had to go to my tutor that after twelve, but it so happened that I was set free sooner than I expected, and was accordingly sauntering down the street on my way home, with my books under my arm, when I saw a crowd coming up the other way from the direction of South Meadow. I quickened my pace and got to my dame's door, expecting to see them pass ; but instead of that all stopped at the house, and then I saw that in the middle a door was carried, which had been taken off its hinges, and on which was laid one of the boys of our house, to whom, evidently, some accident had happened.

"What's all this about ?" was the first question. "What has happened to Ramsay ?"

"Why, I believe his leg is broken," said Brown, who was standing near. "And what's more, it's that young Farrant minor that has done it."

“How? Did he shin him on purpose?”

“Not a bit of it, it was quite an accident. Ramsay was carrying down the ball pretty well by himself, and young Farrant, being on the opposite side, naturally charged him to try and take it away. Then their legs must have crossed, I suppose, and so Ramsay's, being the most brittle, snapped.”

“Well, I don't know how one bone coming against another could do it. I could understand it if it was a kick with a heavy boot.”

“Oh, it all depends where you catch the blow; sometimes a bone will break directly, and sometimes stand against anything. It's quite a chance.”

“What a bore for our match to-morrow!”

“Yes, he was a useful man in the field. Pity he was so light.”

“Joynes's will beat us now.”

“Oh, they won't. Our fellows will play all the better for having lost a man.”

“Well, I hope they will. We shall see.”

And so we did see the next day, for it had been settled some time ago that on that Saturday Argles's house was to play Joynes's, and the match was to take place in South Meadow.

The eleven who were to support the honour of the house had been pretty well determined on already, for there had been other matches, and plenty of opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of who were the best players. Ramsay had hitherto been always one of our representatives, and being a light weight and quick runner, had always had the position of “corner,” outside the bully, assigned to him. Now, however, that he was disabled,

it became the duty of the captain to look out for some one to supply his place.

“I am sure I don’t know who we can get,” said Barry, who had been thinking over the different performances of very nearly every boy in the house. “It’s so difficult to choose among a lot who are so nearly equal.”

“Well, take anybody. Look here, here’s Norton ; what do you say to him ?”

“Well, I believe he is as good as anybody. What do you say, Norton. ? Can you come after twelve to-day ?”

“Oh yes, I’ll come,” I answered at once. “I ought to go to my tutor, but I’ll cut him to-day.”

“Very good. Mind you are here.”

So it was settled that I was to be one of the eleven who were to play Joynes’s. The sense of my own importance at once rose, and it was with the grandest possible air that I descended in the school-yard on the probabilities of the approaching strife ; and being now in a position of some authority, I could lay down the law to pretty nearly the whole division, who were all of them more or less interested in the result.

There was no inducement needed that day to make us all change as quickly as possible the moment school was over. By a quarter past twelve the whole eleven were on the ground, with numbers of their supporters and admirers, and as the half-hour struck the bully was formed in the centre of the field, and the match began.

It is a curious thing this bully, as it is called ; very curious to those who have never seen a game at football before, and who cannot imagine why the boys should all be so heaped together. Each side forms down opposite to the other. In the centre of our side stood Barry, a

big heavy fellow, who filled the place of post, as it is called, and was a sort of centre point round whom the rest clustered. On each side of him were two supporters, and behind these three two more backing up. The rest of our eleven were dispersed at the corners or behind. The opposite side followed the same arrangement, for, indeed, it is the regular one for an Eton game. There were thus ten of us in the middle of the field, and when the ball was placed in the centre of this group, and each side bent down over it, striving to force it beyond their opponents, the whole ten seemed to form one solid mass, which to the spectators, who could see nothing of what was going on on the ground, might seem heaving and struggling in the most senseless manner, did they not know that the secret of the contest lay at the bottom, and might at any moment by a sudden movement be brought out before their eyes into the open field.

I had not been entrusted with Ramsay's place as corner, which to-day was filled by Farrant minor, but I was one of the two backers-up in rear of Barry, and it was thus my duty to prevent the ball coming through, and to force it, if possible, towards the other side. Our opponents, however, had the weight on their side, and in spite of all that we could do we were gradually overborne, till at length the whole of us subsided on the ground. And now for the first time I caught sight of the ball in the midst of the multiplicity of legs that surrounded it; nor did it appear to be a difficult job to hook it out and carry it on some way, perhaps before half of the heroes who had been upset could regain their legs. I whispered the plan to Farrant, and between us we soon managed it; but it was more difficult to get ourselves out of the crush than the ball. I was caught

by the leg, and totally unable to extricate myself; Farrant, however, was luckier, and as I lay on the ground I could console myself by knowing that our efforts had not been useless, since the ball was now well on its way towards the enemy's goals. Hopes, however, are made to be blasted; the "behind" caught it and sent it flying back far over our heads. Farrant had lost his chance, but he rushed on as if the ball had still been before him, and raising his foot, gave a kick with such a good will, that the wretched (?) "behind" was laid sprawling on the ground. Such things will happen, and Farrant declared afterwards it was quite a mistake; but in every match there is a certain amount of this "cool" or cold-blooded shinning, which really one would have thought Etonians might have put a stop to.

Backwards and forwards the ball goes. Now a run down towards one end or other, but as it gets near the goals some one is sure to step in, and with a touch at the right moment, send it beyond the reach of its nursing father. So by the time the hour strikes neither side has done anything, and as the goals are changed, each side determines to put forth their best powers during this last half-hour. Nor is such a determination fruitless in results. The wind, perhaps, was now a little more on our side; the ball gets gradually nearer to the enemy's post, and soon a shout announces that Argles's have got a goal, while as yet Joynes's have nothing. It was quickly done, and raised our spirits tremendously, while at the same time it made Joynes's, if possible, play fiercer than before. But it was too late, they could do nothing, the wind remained against them, and when half-past one struck the match was over, and my dame's were left the winners by one goal to nothing.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAIR.

"As the fair happened on the following day, I had intentions of going myself."—*Vicar of Wakefield*.

THERE was only one event besides the football which broke the monotony of this autumn half, and furnished us with some variety of amusement. This was the fair, which took place at Windsor every year at the end of October, and was a sort of mine of attraction for every boy in the school, rendered perhaps doubly tempting by the fact of a visit to it being strictly forbidden. There is no doubt that there were all sorts of things and persons to be found there which it is most decidedly undesirable boys should get mixed up with. The characters of the rabble that attend such meetings are none of the purest, and the examples which they set, and the scenes of low life which boys will allow themselves to be introduced to by them, are certainly not what either master or parents could approve of. Nor is this the only thing ; for in the company where a boy is likely to lose the keenness of his morality, it is also probable that he will equally lose the contents of his purse, which to himself perhaps would seem the worst loss of all ; and it is thus as I imagine, from a double motive, that the

authorities have always steadily set their face against any excursion to Windsor during the days that the fair is going on. There are of course a great number of innocent amusements to be found, but where the good is so mixed up with the bad that it is impossible to separate them, the best plan is to avoid the whole thing altogether.

Boys will of course never acknowledge the force of such reasoning. They are always, in their own opinion, capable of taking care of themselves and their property, and of resisting all temptations. At least I know I thought so myself, as my first October at Eton began to draw to an end; and the knowledge that the fair was forbidden, seemed to be a sort of insult put upon the whole school, which required that we should all vindicate our powers and characters by going every one of us to the forbidden place.

Eagerly was the day looked forward to which was to crown our dreams with the reality; and many were those who, on the day before the actual fair, spent their after four in going up town, and observing the preparations that were being made for the next day. Martin had been one of this inquisitive number, and accordingly, as we sat over our fire that evening when tea was done, I began to ask him what he had seen, and what he could augur from it for the morrow.

"The first thing I want to know," I said, "is the actual place where the fair is held. Is it in the street, or in the Acre, or where?"

"Why it is pretty nearly everywhere, I think," he answered. "As soon as you get round Damnation Corner you see it."

"Do you really? I wonder who gave that corner its name."

"I am sure I don't know, but it's the most likely of all places to make one swear, especially at the fair time, when you may meet a master round the turn at any minute."

"Well, after the Corner. Do the stalls begin before you get to the Curfew Tower?"

"Yes, that is to say, I don't know. I only saw a lot of poles and carts. But higher up the street there are tents put up already, and all sorts of things are going on in Bachelor's Acre."

"What do you mean?"

"Why there are carts, and shows, and knock 'em downs, and all those sort of things."

"There'll be ten times the number to-morrow, I should think."

"Yes. We'll go up after twelve; shall we?"

"All right. We'll meet at my dame's door."

It is needless to say that there was no game at football the next day. Everybody was too anxious to rush after the newer and more exciting pleasure which was promised to them up town; and scarcely was morning school over before a long string of boys was to be seen wending their way towards the bridge, as fast as the sense of decorum felt by all Etonians would allow them to proceed. It was impossible that any masters could be there so early in the day, for all of them, very nearly, had been engaged up to the time that the boys were dismissed, and after that had had to go back to their houses, in order to take off the gown which was always worn by them in school; so by starting early, and thus getting in front of them, one avoided at all events the

chance of being sent back before even reaching the forbidden ground.

Martin and I knew this well enough, and accordingly we were among the first to hurry off, congratulating ourselves that there would at all events be no impediment to our getting up there in safety. But scarcely had we reached the bridge, when the sight of some of those in front of us, who turned back suddenly and began flying towards us, made us also begin to think of retiring into some hiding-place.

“What is it?” asked Martin, as a number of us together bundled into the shop of a fishing-tackle maker just under the bridge.

“Why there’s Turner coming down town. Didn’t you see him?”

“No, or I shouldn’t have asked. But how can he have been up there at this time?”

“His division is at mathematics, that’s it; so he’s not been into school at all.”

“I see—there he goes; we are all right now he has passed.”

Thus released from all immediate fear, we started again upon our perilous journey. This time the bridge was crossed without even an alarm, and in spite of many misgivings as we approached the ill-omened corner, even that too was rounded in safety. After this we felt tolerably secure; a few more steps would bring us among the booths, and when there we could manage to dodge about, so as to elude any enemy with much greater ease than in the open street.

“Hallo, here come Alston and Darrell,” said Martin, and as he spoke the two joined us.

"Well," said Alston, grinning from ear to ear, "what are you two fellows up to? Going to get swished, eh?"

"No, that we ain't," I answered; "but I should think you were safe to be, you're such an unlucky fellow. I wouldn't go with him, Darrell, you're sure to be caught."

"Well, suppose we join you," he answered, "and then we can all go together under your guidance, which of course will be safe, won't it? Fellows like you can make sure of that, can't you?" he added, with a laugh.

"Come along then. We shall be all right. Look here; what are these things here, these first things?"

"Why, don't you see you set the man on horseback at the end swinging, and then you fire. If you hit him you get two-penn'orth of nuts; if you hit his horse, half the lot, and so on."

"Don't stop over those sort of things," said Alston, "there's much better fun beyond."

But everything, to us who had never seen a fair before in our lives, was a cause for stopping and admiring. The rifle galleries, where they gave you two shots for a penny, were minutely examined, and every stall which we passed, whatever was the sort of trumpery with which it was filled, formed an excuse for loitering to examine what there was. Dolls, and knives, and penny trumpets, and rattles, all required attention; boxes and brooches were haggled over, and rings, and even rags minutely inspected, as though there never had been such an opportunity for providing oneself with so many commodities. To Alston all this was a cause of the greatest impatience, for he was eager to get on to the Acre, and leave all the trumpery of the booths, in order to get as quickly to the roulette-tables and other gambling places with which that quarter

of the fair abounded. The only one shop which he condescended to stop at, and which somewhat astonished me at first, was a stall whereon the most beautiful kings and queens and castles, all made out of gilt gingerbread, were displayed; but the reason for his doing so was soon made evident, when out of one of the vast tins, labelled with some very innocent title, were produced a store of crackers, which were soon transferred to our friend's pockets, and became from that time a source of terror and annoyance to all the timid horses and females which he could find to attack.

He was certainly an amusing fellow, Alston; and as he hurried us along kept us in a perpetual roar of laughter by his mad jokes, and the remarks he made upon passers-by. The only thing was that he was such an utterly thoughtless fellow, and so full of his own amusement, that he might have run straight into any master's arms, and never found it out till he was brought to a standstill. We knew this perfectly, and that it was this invariable carelessness which multiplied the scrapes he was ever getting into, and therefore we redoubled our watch, for our own sake as well as for his. But fortunately no apparition came to disturb us; the retreating figure of one of the masters was indeed seen as we reached the top of Peascod Street; but beyond this nothing occurred to interrupt our progress as we made our way towards the Acre.

Bachelor's Acre is a name which it is probable that few people even at Windsor could tell the origin of. All that one can say about it is that it has been given to a large area of waste land, which seems to remain almost unappropriated by any one, though it is situated in the very

centre of the town. It is just one of those waste places which are seen sometimes where houses have been pulled down, and where no one appears to have cared to rebuild anything, but to have allowed the heaps of rubbish and weeds to multiply and form a thorough scene of desolation. The time of the fair was perhaps the occasion when the place looked its best, for the one reason that you saw less of it. Booths covered its deformities, and softened down the irregularities of surface ; while the multitude of people that thronged it gave it an aspect of life and gladness, which its melancholy and deserted appearance on ordinary days was very far from suggesting. Now, however, the wandering crowds that make up such meetings had fixed their head quarters here, and it was to this point that Alston had been encouraging us all along to bend our way, as to the centre of all attractions, and the most likely place for any fun.

There was no mistaking an Eton boy in the crowd. Everybody of course at once knew where he came from, and all the professional tricksters of the place looked on us at once as their surest game. Every device was put before us, and all sorts of temptations held out to induce us to stop and have a trial, as they called it, of our luck. Cards, rings, coins, everything in fact was made into an instrument for gaining a little money during this harvest of inexperience ; and if the crowd was less than on the great race-courses which the same sort of gentry patronize, still their gains probably did not fall very far short of the same amount.

“Oh, I say,” said Darrell, “I must have a try at this card trick ; there are only three cards, and one must be able to tell where the king is.”

"Don't be a fool," said Alston, who for once in his life knew what he was about.

"Well, I'll try it for nothing, first. Look, there I can tell the card at once."

"Of course you can, as you put no money on it."

"Well, here goes for sixpence. That's the king, that one," cried Darrell, and turned it up triumphantly, only to find, however, that it was a deuce.

"Never mind, sir, try again," suggested the tempter; and so he did, but still lost, till at last he gave it up in a rage.

"Why, don't you see, Darrell," said Alston, as we walked away, "they let you find it out of course when you have staked nothing; then they do it all fair, but as soon as you put any money on, why it's then worth while to cheat you."

"After all I have only lost two shillings," he answered. "I can't understand though why I couldn't do it, it looks so simple."

"I don't recommend you to try it again, anyhow. The roulette is better than that. We'll go to the tent where it is presently."

"Come along then," said Darrell, who had all the spirit of a gambler. "What do you say, Norton? What are you looking at?"

"I am only reading 'The veracious history of the blue dwarf and the one-eyed giantess,' who are to be seen inside that cart. Perhaps you'd like to go in."

"Well, I don't know."

"Oh, don't let us go," said Martin; "there'll be a frightful smell."

So we passed by dwarfs and giantesses, performing

ponies and elephants, and at last found our way to a suspicious-looking corner, where there was a sort of barricade of waggons, behind which had been fastened canvas, so as to enclose a space within which we should be sheltered entirely from the gaze of those outside. A most filthy and repulsive-looking figure that was walking about near it invited us to enter, and raising up a corner of the curtain, admitted us within the veil. Behind a table at one side sat two men, the duplicates almost of our friend outside ; one of these was busy with a handful of coppers, while the other was perpetually setting a miniature roulette-table in motion, and spinning the ball round it. The players who faced these ruffians were all, like ourselves, Eton boys, and I was amused to see Carron among them, eagerly attempting, though in vain, to add to his little store of money.

"I shall have a try now," said Alston, and throwing his penny on the table, cried "Red!" for the cells in which the ball was to rest were not numbered as usual, but painted black and red alternately, so as to make the game really a sort of mixture of roulette and rouge et noir.

The ball spun round, hesitated, jumped in and out of one or two holes, and at last lodged in a black.

"Never mind ; twopence this time. Red again!"

But again the black came. However, he was not discouraged, and backed his favourite colour next time for fourpence ; for, as he assured us, that was the secret of never losing. Doubling after each round that is lost, must in the end, when at length the obstinate colour comes, repay for all that has been lost upon it. It is not a quick way, as he said, of making money ; but it is a very sure one, and there have been cases before now at

Windsor Fair in which the roulette bank has been broken by such perseverance.

Such were the speculations and the conversation we indulged in in that little canvas enclosure, every now and then interrupted perhaps by a false alarm of danger, or by some one rushing out for a moment in order to reassure himself that all was safe. The guardians of the place, however, who knew that their occupation was illegal, kept such a good look-out against masters and policemen, that our game proceeded in quiet, until the monotony of it began to excite us to look for some change of amusement. So we made up our minds to leave the table, and go and look among the general crowd for something else to do. Alston had even replenished his pockets a little, thanks to his own judicious system of procedure; Darrell, as might have been expected, had lost; and Martin and I remained much in the same position that we had been in on our entry.

It was almost a relief to get into the open ground after the confined space into which we had been crowded, and we proceeded leisurely about, looking at all that was around us, but not actually having made up our minds to engage in any of the various amusements which surrounded us. At last a tempting collection of knock 'em downs attracted us, and it was determined that we should all of us try what we could make of them. Four shots for a penny were what was allowed, and as soon as we had put ourselves in position, opposite our different baskets, the sticks were placed in our hands. But few of them unfortunately were fated to be discharged. Our security during the last hour had made us somewhat careless of keeping a good look-out, and almost before

we were aware of it, while the sticks were still in our hands, the enemy was upon us. I had just time to look round to see who it was that threatened us, and recognized in an instant one of the masters named Dyce, who, besides being a tolerably young man, was a remarkably active fellow, and was sure to run us pretty hard. There was no thinking of any one besides oneself at such a moment, and we all fled in different directions, making our way through the crowd as best we could. It was of course impossible for one man to run in four different directions, and at first I thought that Alston would be sure to be the unlucky fellow whose sacrifice would save the rest. But I very soon found out that I myself was the object of Dyce's chase, and that it would require all my exertions to escape. Over a donkey, under a waggon, round the tent of the giantess, all was tried in the hope of baffling and throwing out my pursuer. But it was of no use. He was a far better runner than I was, and even the little start which gave me an advantage, and all the obstacles which a good-natured crowd were eager to throw in the path of a master in such a chase, seemed unavailing to prevent his gaining upon me. It was no use evidently remaining in the Acre, no dodging about there could save me; and so, as a last resource, I made up my mind to cut across the ground as fast as I could, and seek refuge in a little alley which led into Peascod Street, where I might find a house or a shop in which to hide myself. Quick round a corner, where, for the moment, I was out of sight, and then through the crowd which divided for me, as hard as I could to the houses. All the good-will of the spectators was of course on my side, and many were the offensive

cries and epithets which were heard in reference to the pursuer. "Trip him up!" suggested some one, as I heard behind me, and instantly the cry was caught up, and there were so many shouts to the same effect, that I began to hope that it might really be carried into execution, and so I should be delivered from his clutches. But it was not to be so. Everybody shouted for it, yet nobody ventured to do it; for an Eton master is no mean personage in Windsor and its neighbourhood, where the college has so much power and influence; and however much they may be disliked, few people have the courage to enter into open hostility with them. My breath now began to fail me, and there was a little bit of rough ascent before I could get to the houses, which I foresaw would prove a pretty stiff trial. Nevertheless, I charged it as well as I could, but had scarcely reached the top, when, looking round, I saw that Dyce was already at the bottom. We were out of the crowd now, and there was no hope for me save in one final spurt. I did my best, turned the corner, but had scarcely got ten yards down the narrow passage, when his hand was on my shoulder, and we both came to a standstill.

I was now fairly caught, and stood quiet enough. Neither of us indeed could speak a word at first, so thoroughly were we out of breath; but as I looked up into his face, there was a smile of satisfaction upon it which made me begin to hope that the consequences after all would not be so very terrible. The fact was that he was delighted to have caught me; he had enjoyed the excitement of his run, and at the end of it had not been baulked of his prey. So that upon the whole he was very well contented with his own

performances, and inclined to be in the best of humours.

“What’s your name?” was the first question he asked, “and who’s your tutor?”

“Norton, sir. Mr. Turner, sir,” came out together.

“Do you board at Mr. Turner’s?”

“No, sir; at Mr. Argles’s.”

“Very well; I must complain of you.”

This was more than I had expected; however I said nothing.

“You know,” he continued, “you have no business up here, and you have made your fault worse by attempting to run away. I am sorry for you, but you knew you were liable to all this. Go back straight to your dame’s now.”

And still with a half smile on his face, he turned back into the fair, to see if he could not effect more captures. I had lost my friends, and was not inclined to run the risk of being caught a second time in the Acre, and so made my way straight down town as I had been told to do, consoling myself that I should at all events get off my flogging by pleading “first fault.”

CHAPTER XII.

A FLOGGING.

“ For fault but small,
Or none at all,
It came to pass
That beat I was.”

“ HALLO, Darrell,” I cried, “ what became of you ?”
For just as I got on to Windsor Bridge, I descried him in front of me, and ran to overtake him.

“ Oh, I got off all right—and you ?”

“ Why, I saved all the rest of you fellows. I was caught myself.”

“ No ; were you ? How was that ?”

And then I told him the history of my adventures, and what was to come of it.

“ That’s pretty sharp, complaining of you like that,” he remarked.

“ So I think ; but then I had given him the trouble of running.”

“ Yes ; and we were in the worst part of the fair, you know. They consider the Acre an awfully bad place.”

“ How lucky it was he didn’t come upon us at the roulette-table.”

“ We should all have been swished and turned down if he had.”

"Oh, look ! here are those other fellows," said I, as I espied Alston and Martin standing inside Fisher's shop as we passed.

"Well, are you two fellows to be switched?" said Alston, laughing as we joined them.

"No ; but I am," I answered. "What a lucky dog you are ! you got off this time."

"Yes ; but I shouldn't have cared much if I hadn't. It's rather amusing than otherwise."

"I should have thought you were pretty sick of it by this time," for, as I had never yet been flogged myself, and felt some little terror of it, I felt that all this was a species of ridicule on myself.

"Oh, no ; one gets so accustomed to it that one doesn't mind it a bit. But I dare say you won't get it after all."

"Well, I don't know ; do you think they'll give me first fault ?"

"I should think so ; and after all, perhaps he won't complain of you at all. He may send and give you a pæna instead."

"That's what I should think he'd do," said Martin.

And everybody thus began comforting me in the best way they could, but unfortunately only raising hopes which were doomed to disappointment.

At dinner, of course, my adventures and my fate were eagerly discussed among those of our own table, and though opinions were pretty well divided as to whether Dyce would be as good as his word or not, still all agreed that the suspense could not be prolonged beyond three o'clock school. If I was to be flogged at all it would come then ; and if not, I might make up my mind to a pæna instead.

It was with some anxiety, therefore, that I took my place in school. Jackson, as usual, was next to me, but I had not had time to tell him anything, for I was rather late in coming into the school-yard, and Mr. Brougham had already proceeded to call upon some one to begin the lesson by the time I had got settled into my seat. My attention, I am afraid, was not very much given to the book open before me, and every time that the handle of the door turned, I expected to see a messenger, who would summon me to the head master's room. My suspense, however, was kept up almost till the very last, and then at length the dreaded message came. The door opened, and one of the Sixth Form appeared, who went up to Mr. Brougham, and uttered very audibly the four words, "Norton is to stay."

"Very well," said Mr. Brougham. "Norton, you hear that; stay afterwards."

"What's that for?" said Jackson; for the one word stay, in the language of boys and masters, was recognized as a delicate way of expressing staying to be flogged. "Why are you to stay?"

I soon told him the reason, and consulted again for the hundredth time on the probability of my obtaining first fault. But now that I was really in for a visit to the head master, it struck me that it would be more consistent with my dignity to pretend to make as light of it as possible, and accordingly I treated the subject as philosophically and unconcernedly as Alston himself might have done.

"Well, I shall wait outside and see what happens to you," said Jackson, who was a kindhearted sort of a fellow, and did not like to leave an old friend in distress.

“It will all be over in five minutes, whatever happens,” I said, laughing.

“And you’ll find me at the bottom of the stairs when you come down.”

The clock had struck soon after the summons for me had arrived, so most of our conversation had taken place on the way across the school-yard to the bottom of the stairs leading up to the Doctor’s room, which was also always used as the swishing room. There were several boys waiting at the bottom, like myself, but only two for the same disagreeable purpose; the rest were all of them prepostors, or boys whose duty it had been to mark in the members of their respective divisions each school-time, and were now here to present their report as to those who were absent or unwell. The two who were to be my fellow-sufferers were respectively accused, according to the written complaint, one of “continued idleness,” and the other of “gross impertinence,” and neither of them could expect any remission of their sentence, from having both been often in the same predicament before. They were my seniors in the school, and would, therefore, have the first taste of the birch, so I should get a very fair idea, they informed me, of what would afterwards come upon myself.

At last the Doctor dismissed his own division, and then all the prepostors went upstairs, and in turn gave in their report. After this was done it became the culprits’ turn, and the unhappy three walked up together to the place of execution. Besides the Doctor, there was in the room the Sixth Form prepostor and the two junior collegers of the Fifth Form, who were to act as satellites, or assistant torturers, in the work that was to come. The

room itself I was already well acquainted with ; the round table in the centre, with the raised arm-chair at one end of it, backed in its turn by the bust of the Duke of Newcastle, and the gilt names of the successful competitors for the scholarship which he had founded, were all tolerably familiar objects. The block itself I had seen before, but never in such prominence as it was to-day, drawn out towards the centre of the room, and waiting almost in expectancy for its victims. No one who saw it in its present position, and with the ministers of justice around it, could mistake what those two wooden steps were meant for. A vision must almost involuntarily have arisen of kneeling criminals presenting their backs to the smiters, which would decidedly condemn the erroneous opinions of those visitors who before now have imagined it to be an article of bedside utility.

The door closed after we had come in, and all three of us stood waiting for what was to come next.

“Robinson,” said the Doctor, in a monotonous and sleepy, yet withal distinct tone of voice ; “have you anything to say for yourself?”

“No, sir.”

“Then—” go down, I dare say he would have said, but all that we could make out was that he pointed towards the block with his hand.

The victim did as he was told ; his trousers were turned down, and the two collegers held up his shirt, each by one corner, really making a very effective tableau. The birch then descended, and after six successive cuts, the performance as far as regarded Robinson was at an end. Edwards was the next, and as his complaint was for impertinence, he received two extra cuts, making

eight ; but neither of them showed any signs of wincing, which I must say helped to keep up my courage in no small degree.

Now came my own turn ; so I boldly walked up to the Doctor. "Please, sir," I said, "will you give me first fault?"

"You were at the fair, wern't you? I can't give first fault for that. Go down."

It was useless to try further, so I loosened my breeches, and biting my lips tight, knelt down on the block. I was resolved that at all events no cry should escape me, and for the sake of my own glory among my school-fellows, intended to suffer as a hero. But the difficulty of repressing my feelings I found to be in reality by no means so hard as I had anticipated. The first cut, indeed, stung me a little, and it felt at the moment almost as if I was being lashed with a nettle ; but after this the sensation seemed deadened, and the rest of them fell comparatively harmless. Even before the six were completed, I had made up my mind that there was nothing very terrible in being flogged, nor were my ideas altered by the tingling sensation felt afterwards, or by the difficulty in sitting down which usually followed such a punishment.

"How do you feel?" said Jackson, as I made my appearance at the bottom of the stairs.

"Very warm and comfortable," I answered, laughing. "It did sting a little, though."

"Yes ; you'll be like a plum-pudding behind, I dare say, for the next fortnight. However, as it's not the time of year for bathing, nobody will be able to chaff you about it."

"Well, I am going to my dame's," I said. "Come along, too."

"No, I won't do that; but I am glad to see you are so little damaged."

Outside my dame's door there was a knot of acquaintances in waiting to receive me, for a boy becomes a sort of lion on the day that he is switched, and there are sure to be numbers ready to make inquiries, and to testify their commiseration for him. Brown and Farrant especially took a great interest in me, being a child, as they said, of their own rearing; and this interest was of course shared by their minors and others more in the same part of the school as myself. Alston and Darrell had also joined the circle, having been in some measure concerned in my misfortune, and the first of these I could perceive some way off already laughing as soon as he saw me coming down the street.

"Well, what do you think of it?" was his first question, and everybody else seemed equally eager to know what my sensations had been.

"Why, it's nothing at all," I answered, and joined in the laugh.

"Of course it isn't," he said. "How could one stand three in a day if it was—one would become pretty sore."

"I thought of cutting my name on the block," I said. Not that I had ever done so, but I was resolved to show what an amount of coolness and indifference I had possessed.

"Well, I've always thought of doing so, but the wood is so hard. It's mahogany."

"Some fellow really did cut his some time ago," said Brown. "His name was a short one, like mine,

and he did a letter of it every time he was brought up there."

"Did he ever finish it?"

"I don't know. I don't quite think he did. But look here, there's kickabout going on this afternoon. I vote we all go."

I had no wish to go down and form one of the crowd which assembled every after four in South Meadow, to kick all the balls they could find in any and every direction amongst each other. This was what they called kickabout, but to me it had always seemed a poor amusement; and this afternoon of all others I was more disinclined than ever for it. So Martin and I went up together to our room, and there discussed what each of us, in reality and without any bragging, thought of the punishment of the birch rod.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE EASTER HALF AND ITS AMUSEMENTS.

" Or what greater pleasure is there to be felte, when a dogge followeth an hare, than when a dogge followeth a dogge, or a manne a manne? for one thing is done in bothe, that is to saye, runnynge, yf thou haste pleasure therein."—*Utopia*.

IF there was little to do in the autumn, there was still less in the spring; and the monotony of the one amusement during the football half was succeeded by an almost entire want of any definite amusement at all during the months of February and March. Fives, indeed, were supposed to be the game peculiarly belonging to the season, but so few comparatively played them that it could hardly be said that the whole school took an interest in them. Even if they had wished to do so it would have been impossible, for the number of courts, or walls as we used to call them, were so limited, that only a few could be engaged in the game at the same time. Six walls were not calculated to give amusement to the whole school, and of those who really took any pleasure in the game, by far the greater number were always to be found looking on instead of playing, envying the luck of those who had secured their places, and plotting one with another how to succeed themselves on the next opportunity.

The possession of a court was certainly a very keenly contested thing on every occasion during this season ; and the rush that was made for them at the close of every school, or on coming out of chapel, might have given a stranger the idea either that something very terrible had happened, or that a race was being run, for which the prize was to be something far greater than an hour's amusement. It was a rule that no wall could be considered taken unless there was some one actually upon it, to claim it by the right of occupancy. The consequence was that they always became the reward of the swift, or of those who were let out of school earlier than the rest ; but still it was never without a struggle, and the stream of runners flying down Keate's Lane, and round the corner past Joynes's house, testified day after day to the eagerness of spirit which could thus prompt boys to exhaust themselves merely for the chance of not being disappointed of the pleasure of their game.

Another amusement which was just then coming into fashion consisted of running with beagles after a drag. There was a very active fellow, one of the "cads" about the wall, named Polly Green, and he used to go across country uncommonly well, so that hounds and sportsmen got a very fair run. It was a question at first how such a sport would be regarded by the college authorities—whether it would be looked upon as harmless, or as savouring too much of the hunting field ; and so it was carried on for a long time in secrecy, and the hounds were kept far out of bounds, in a small kennel at the corner of the Brocas near the river. But, of course, it all became known, and the masters, strange to say, took no notice whatever of it. It was a rare display of good

sense on their part not to stop such a harmless and healthy exercise, and the tacit approval which they thus gave it helped in no slight measure to increase its popularity in the school. Subscriptions came in greater quantities, the field became more numerous, and the position of master of the beagles a more honourable post; so that at length, from being when I first knew them little more than a private concern, it has gradually come to be one of the recognized institutions of the school, never presided over save by a "swell" of the first water.

But since it was only a small set that hunted with the beagles, and since the fives walls were too few to provide amusement for any number, the majority of the boys were left almost without any single thing to do out of school hours. The Lower boys, especially, found that scarcely anything was left for them; and numberless were the expedients resorted to in order to devise some means of passing their idle after twelves. Hedges and ditches seemed to have a special attraction at this time of the year; and parties of two and three might be seen all over the country, jumping over everything that came in their way, and equally regardless whether they were to stick fast among thorns, or in the softer mud of some ill-smelling ditch. Martin and I had often gone out in this way, to try our prowess; but my most constant companion had been Farrant, who was altogether of a more active disposition. It is true that he was heavy, but in spite of his short and solid appearance, his legs carried him better than most people's, and I found him very useful in leading the way when a thick hedge had to be gone through, where a light weight might possibly

have stuck fast. We had often consulted together whether it would not be possible to make up one large party, instead of going about in little detached societies, for then we should have more fun, from the greater number of misfortunes which would be sure to happen.

"I'll tell you what we might do," he said to me one day, as we had been thinking on the subject. "We might have a paper chase, and that would bring a lot of fellows together."

"What, you mean when two fellows start in front, and scatter bits of paper, as a trail for the rest to follow them by?"

"Yes; you must get two good runners, you know, so as not to get caught easily."

"And then every one is bound to follow over every jump where the paper is. You mustn't go over at an easier place, you must go where they go. Isn't that it?"

"That's it. My tutor's have have had two or three already."

"Well, I should think lots of fellows would be ready to come in my dame's if they were only asked. Suppose we try this evening."

"If you like. We can go round and see who'll come."

"When shall we go? After supper?"

"Oh, no, we'll go before that. We'll go some time after tea."

Of course, when we talked of going round, we did not mean to canvass the whole house, for such an act would have been a piece of presumption on the part of a Lower boy which neither of us would ever have dreamt of. We were still pretty nearly at the bottom of the house list, and always intended to confine our operations to

those pretty much on a level with ourselves ; knowing, too, that even thus it would indirectly come before the whole house, and thus our object would be gained without subjecting ourselves to any censure for undue forwardness. Farrant major and Brown we could of course speak to in the most open manner, from having messed with them so long ; and if these two would take it up, they themselves would take care that the Lower boys were not left the only ones in the field.

"Oh, but I can't run," said Farrant, as I asked him at tea what he thought of the plan.

"Oh, yes you can ; you run fast enough at football."

"Well, but that young fool, my minor, is sure to spoil anything he has got to do with."

"I should think so, indeed," said Brown. "You'll get corrupted by the company you keep, Norton."

"I don't care," I answered, laughing. "And he might say the same about you."

"I am sure he does, too, young dog," said Farrant. "I'll tell you what, minor. I hope, if you lead this cursed paper chase of yours, you'll get stuck in the mud and never come out again."

"That's all right," answered the minor, "and then you'd have to go without your toast and coffee in the mornings. Come along, Norton ; ain't you glad those two fellows ain't coming with us ? Good-bye, major." And he ran off, slamming the door behind him.

I followed more leisurely, and found that he was waiting at the top of the stairs, studying one of the house notices which had been pinned up under the gas-lamp.

"Look here," he said, "somebody has lost a pencil-

case. However, I haven't found it, so it doesn't matter. Let's go and warm ourselves at your fire for a bit."

Martin was not there, for he had not come back from Carron's room, where they always messed.

"How is it those two are such good friends, I wonder," observed Farrant, "for I never thought that Carron had very much in him."

"Why, you see, he can be civil enough when he chooses, and can make himself a very pleasant fellow. Then he really likes Martin, and Martin is too good-natured to dislike him. That's about the truth."

"I suppose it is. They will both come, I should think, if we get up a paper chase."

"Sure to come. But here they are," for the open door allowed us to see them at the other end of the passage.

"Look here," said Carron, as he came in, "have either of you two found a pencil-case?"

"So that was your notice under the lamp, was it?"

"Yes; have you found it?"

"No; we haven't seen it."

"Well, I don't know what to do about it."

"Wait till it turns up, I should say," said Farrant.

"That's all very well, but I don't want to lose it. I've told Argles about it already."

"Well, that's all you can do to-night. And now we want to know if you'll come for a paper chase to-morrow?"

"I don't know. When do you propose?"

"After four, I should think. To-morrow is a half-holiday, so we shall have plenty of time."

And then the discussion went on about the different arrangements while we all sat round the fire, roasting

ourselves as only boys of that age can do. Other subjects gradually crept in, and all of us became so absorbed in the conversation that the time slipped by unheeded ; and when Martin looked up to the chimney-piece, and cried out that it was eight o'clock, we scarcely believed at first that what he said was the truth.

"Well, if it's eight o'clock, the sooner we go and get up some fellows for to-morrow, the better. Come on, Norton, let's go at once."

This was Farrant's invitation, which I was by no means slow to accept, and at once followed him out of the room.

"Let's go in here," said he, pointing to a door on the opposite side of the passage.

"There's only Dyke and Johnson there, and they'll neither of them come."

"We'll try them, at all events."

The door was opened, and the owners of the room were at once seen to be within. Both were sitting at the table in the centre of the room, on which were two brass candlesticks, each holding a tallow candle, and a number of books of different sizes, which indicated that the owners were hard at work. Dyke, indeed, under the influence of the chronic dread of being behindhand which ever possessed him, was engaged on some exercise which would at all events not be shown up till the end of the week ; and Johnson, who was also one of the provident kind in the matter of school work, was assiduously painting one of the outline maps which form the weekly terror of all in the Remove. It was somewhat a dreary sight to see those two sitting at opposite ends of the inky tablecloth, with a couple of rushlights dimly

burning to act as a barricade between them ; and I am sure that neither of us as we entered ever thought that the two specimens before us would receive our proposition with anything except abhorrence. Still we tried, and as our failure was expected, we were the less mortified. One declared that he must positively finish his map, and the other that he had to go to his tutor's.

"Who are we to try next?" said I, as we left this atmosphere of work.

"Oh, anybody. Luckily we're not all such 'saps' as those two."

"Well, there's Waller on this floor, and Dickson too."

"Waller's sure to come. Let's go and see him."

The disturbance which was to be heard as we reached the door seemed to promise that we should find a very different scene from what we had come upon in the last room we had visited ; and when we got in, instead of finding Waller quietly seated at his books, he was to be seen madly struggling with three or four others, who had all met to enjoy a little private game of football by candle-light. Everything, indeed, was as different as possible from the room we had last been into, and the character of the owner was at once to be traced in the general appearance of his room. Instead of the table being placed decorously in the centre, and covered with books such as might promote learning, we found it roughly put on one side, and instead of different volumes, all the chairs in the room were piled upon it, in order to be put out of the way. Dull and dingy photographs of Eton and the neighbourhood were here replaced by a variety of sporting scraps ; and instead of the tolerable order in which a quiet, hard-reading boy keeps his room, was

found the utter confusion of the typical Lower boy, in whose mind the love of Eton is never associated for a moment with the love of work. However, Waller was by far the better fellow of the two, and as may be imagined, we had little difficulty in persuading him to join our plan for the next day.

"Recollect, then, after four," I said, as we turned away.

"Yes, but look here ; get a whole lot of others, or it will be no fun."

"We are going to. We are just going to look after Dickson."

"Oh, are you ? Well, I say, go in quite quietly, and see if you don't startle him."

"Why ?"

"Because there are four of them there having a game at whist."

"How do you know ?"

"Because they said that was the reason they couldn't come and play here."

"Oh, oh ! we'll frighten them then."

Cards are strictly prohibited in the whole school, and so when any one attempted to play, it was always done on the sly. Mr. Argles, indeed, was not very severe when he did find out such proceedings ; he was unwilling to take any great notice of such an event, but he made a rule of always confiscating the cards, and this of itself was enough to make boys cautious how they played. When we threw open the door, therefore, with a sudden burst, there was a general movement of hands under the table by the party who were sitting at it ; but even if they had been quick enough to conceal the actual cards, their whole appearance was so sus-

picious as to leave hardly a doubt as to what they had been about. No one, indeed, could be expected to believe that four boys would sit at equal distances round a table with nothing on it, except for the purpose of some such amusement ; and I have often myself been obliged to give up what I held underneath, though there was no surer evidence against me than this absence of all pretence of occupation.

“Upon my word, I thought you were Argles,” said Dickson.

“That’s what we meant you to do,” answered Farrant.

“I was just going to drop one or two cards on the floor, so that Argles might not have had a perfect pack to play with himself, had he taken them from us.”

“Then you have been saved the trouble, and can go on quietly,” said I. “All we want is to know what you are going to do to-morrow. Can you come for a paper chase after four?”

“Oh, yes, I’ll come, if you’ll go away now ; for we want to finish this hand.”

“Yes, we’ll all come,” shouted the rest. And so, seeing that they did not want us, we retired almost as quickly as we had entered.

By the time the supper-bell rang, a number of promises had been obtained. Almost all the Lower boys, with the exception of Dyke and Johnson, had said they would come, so Farrant and I felt pretty sure that there would be a fair muster the next afternoon. The point now to be decided was who should be chosen to lead it. There were to be two to run together, and play the part of fox for the rest to follow. Farrant, as the prime originator, and a very fair runner also, ought un-

doubtedly to be one, but it was difficult to settle who should be his companion. I myself was of no use, for I never could keep up any great distance, or clear any great leaps, both of which were positively essential to any one who was to lead, in order to give the field a good run, both in point of time and as to stiffness of country. So at last it was settled that Farrant and Oldfield were to be the two leaders. Oldfield was still in the fourth form, but was a taller and more active fellow than most of the rest of us ; and besides, from having been at Eton some time, knew the best points of every hedge and ditch in the country.

The next morning we were busy enough in collecting paper, which was to be torn up in small pieces to serve as scent. Every newspaper and every old book that could be found were laid hands upon, and hurried into the room where the process of destruction was going on. An immense quantity was of course required, since it was to be scattered all along the course, and at some of the more difficult jumps a good deal was always required, to make the generality of the field perceive which was the right way over. The floor of our room, however, was at length pretty well covered, and when we had thus got what seemed to be enough, the next thing to do was to stuff it into two linen bags, which had been made for the occasion, and which were to be slung round the two leaders. They were good-sized, solid-looking things when they were filled, and in the afternoon, when we were all about to set out, many of us remarked that their weight, and especially their size, must prove rather an impediment to their bearers.

"Oh, but we shall soon make them lighter," said Farrant,

as we went down towards the starting point, which was to be near the Sanatorium.

"Yes, there are such a lot of hedges at first," said Oldfield, "we shall want a good quantity. Very little will mark the track over ploughed land."

"How much start are we to have?" said Farrant, as we got into the long narrow field where the course was to begin.

"Five minutes," suggested some one.

"Oh no, ten," said some one else. "That won't be too much. You must make the most of it, and the moment it's up we shall come after you."

The longer time was generally approved of, and the two started across the first ditch, which was within twenty yards of us. They proceeded leisurely enough at first, clearing everything with apparent ease, and never hurrying for fear of exhausting themselves.

"We shall catch them up directly," said Waller, who was standing near me.

"Wait a bit," said Dickson. "They are just getting out of sight round that corner, and then I expect they'll go on a good bit quicker."

Only three more minutes to wait, and then at last we started. No scent of course was needed to guide us to the corner up to which they had been in sight ; it was there that the paper had first begun to be scattered, and as we looked on to see what it would lead us to, we saw a tremendously broad ditch with a hedge rising beyond it, which would evidently test all our powers.

"Oh, I say, I don't like the looks of that," said Waller ; "and look, there's such an easy place just up above ; what a bore we can't go over there !"

"They've put enough paper at any rate to mark our way. They wouldn't leave us in doubt at any rate."

"I don't believe they went over there themselves ; they must have gone over up above, and then come and scattered the paper down here. Never mind, here goes."

A rush, a spring, and a splash followed, and then Waller was seen attempting to clamber up the hedge, but with half his legs in the water. The bushes, in fact, rose so straight up that it was almost impossible to avoid getting your feet wet, unless you could spring into the middle of them and stay there ; but this, as I afterwards found out for myself, was perfectly impossible. I tried to do so and failed ; they almost pushed me back into the stream, and when at last I scrambled through to the other side, I found myself in a very much worse plight than most of my companions. But it was no more than we had all of us expected, and our trousers and shirts had been carefully adapted to such an occasion.

"Oh, I say, here is another of these things," screamed some one in front, for no sooner were we out of one scrape than into another. But this next one luckily was very much more easy than the last, and we all of us passed it in safety. Boys, however, and even men too, rejoice in exaggerating the difficulties in their path, when they know they intend to overcome them.

The scent now was no longer spread in such quantities. We had entered upon a grass field, beyond which was a broad extent of plough, to which our course was leading. The game had just come in sight, and could be seen at the other extremity of the furrows, just getting clear of the heavy ground we were about to enter upon. It was

now that our powers of endurance were to be tried, and Waller, whose spirit and activity had carried him triumphantly over or through all the fences, began to look very uncomfortable at the prospect of the dull work before him. It was indeed merely a case of plodding on, without any excitement to relieve the monotony ; and the strain upon the breathing, caused by the exertions of getting through the damp and clinging soil, was so great, that as Farrant told me afterwards, they had calculated on it to "choke off" a good number of the field. And it certainly did what they expected, for by the time we got to the end of it, very few were as well up as Waller and myself. Half of them were to be seen behind us, quietly walking over the ridges, having come to a stop through sheer inability to keep on. Martin had not yet quite given up, but he was still some way behindhand, and as for Dickson, Brown minor, and others, they were scarcely to be distinguished at all. Of those that were up with us, and who altogether amounted scarcely to more than five or six, by far the best runner was Barclay ; it was not his swiftness that gave him the advantage, but the power of keeping up for almost any length of time, and he was already some little way ahead of the rest. All of us were panting in the most exhausted way, but a smooth run over the next field helped to restore us a good deal, and when we saw that the objects of our pursuit had scarcely gained on us at all, our spirits revived. Waller especially, who had been terribly sullen over the plough, brightened up amazingly, and in the intervals of his puffing and blowing gave utterance to many sanguine expectations as to eventually coming up with the game ahead.

"They'll come to Chalvey soon. I hope they'll stick there."

But unfortunately for us, instead of sticking they cleared it manfully, and we could see them looking back in a sort of derisive way to see how we should fare. Chalvey ditch was indeed a formidable jump at any time, but especially to boys exhausted by nearly three quarters of an hour's running. The courage of some of us failed as we approached it. Barclay by this time was well ahead, and he cleared it. This encouraged us in some measure, and Waller and I jumped together; a scramble up the bank was all he needed to land him safe, but I found myself in a much worse position. I had jumped short of the bank altogether, and had come down into the bed of the stream. The water was as shallow as possible, but the mud underneath seemed to be the accumulation of ages, and I sank pretty nearly up to my knees.

"I can't go on any longer," I shouted to Waller; "you must get on as fast as you can."

"Well, I will," he said; "but I'm pretty nearly done for."

I was entirely so, and seemed likely at first to stick altogether. The others, warned by my misfortune, had hesitated, and eventually preferred to remain on their own side. The consequence was that there was no one to give me a hand, and so I had to struggle out as well as I could by myself. It is not a pleasant sensation attempting to get out of a mud-bank; one feels so utterly powerless in consequence of both legs being fixed, and it was only after several desperate wrenches and contortions of the body that one limb was disengaged. The other appeared

to have got into a more tenacious bed still ; nevertheless I thought it was sure to be a comparatively easy matter now that the other one was disengaged and resting on firm ground, which I had been able to reach from my nearness to the bank. One tug, indeed, brought the leg itself away, but unfortunately not all that belonged to it. The extended surface of my boot had offered such a resistance to the mud which had closed above it, and its elastic sides had so yielded to the persuasion, that I found myself left with only my stocking, while the outer covering remained to add to those many relics which the discoveries of later ages will produce in order to puzzle ethnologists.

There was of course an end to the paper chase as far as I was concerned, so I sat down on the bank to consider how I should get home, and was not very sorry when I saw Waller suddenly give in, and presently turn back and begin walking quietly towards where I was. It was another plough which had finally choked him off, and so he had come back to get a companion for his return to my dame's. Barclay was now the only one of the pursuers left, and so we consoled ourselves as we walked home, that though we were defeated we were not disgraced.

“Well, what happened ?” said some of those standing about the door as we came in.

“I don't know what happened to Farrant and Oldfield,” answered Waller, “I only know what happened to us. But they'll be here themselves soon.”

And so they were. Almost before we had changed our things they were in the passage, telling what had happened at the end. After passing Chalvey they had

turned to the right towards the Slough road ; but feeling, as I imagine, though they would not acknowledge it, somewhat exhausted themselves, and seeing as they said that there was only one behind them, they considered the chase virtually at an end, and sat down and waited till Barclay came up.

Thus ended our first paper chase that year, but we were so well pleased with it, in spite of its fatigues, that many others were from that time originated in my dame's. In fact, before the end of the school-time it had come to be looked upon as a weekly institution.

CHAPTER XIV.

ATHLETICS.

"In single combat shalt thou buckle with me."

Henry VI.

"YOU are coming down to Sixpenny, of course," shouted Trevor, as he passed me running out of school one morning towards the end of the half.

"Yes, I'm coming," I answered, and really the whole of our division seemed about to do the same. There was great excitement in the Remove that morning. The rumour of coming strife had found its way to every one, and it was almost universally known that a fight was about to take place between Anderson of our own division, and Taylor, who was in the Upper Fourth. This was enough to send all our thoughts far away from the lesson that morning, and caused an amount of inattention and whispering, which brought down numberless punishments from Mr. Dyce, at whose feet we were sitting.

Anderson was one of those lively, good-natured boys who are always in mischief, and whose spirits seem to prompt them to do and dare more than other people. He was in a certain measure popular, but the freedom of his remarks, and the carelessness which he showed for people as well as things, prevented him becoming the

thorough favourite which a small amount of consideration on his part might have made him. Compared, however, to Taylor, his defects seemed to vanish. The spirits and lightheartedness of the one shone so immeasurably above the sullen gloom of the other; and his thoughtlessness of others appeared a positive virtue when contrasted with the malice and ill-will for which his adversary had become famous. Nor could any one help being struck by the different appearance of the two. Our sympathies always encourage us to side with the weakest party, and Anderson, though stout, and well put together, was nearly a head shorter than the other. This of itself would insure him supporters, while in addition his own countenance, plain and open, contrasted most favourably with Taylor's sallow and distorted features.

"Do you think there'll be time before the running comes off?" was my question, as I caught up Trevor, who had run on in front, for the school races were to come off to-day.

"Time? I should think so. Why, ten minutes will make them both sick of it. I don't expect they will go on longer than that."

"Well, perhaps not. I haven't heard yet how it was settled they were to fight at all. What did it begin with?"

"I don't exactly know myself. Some one told me that Anderson had begun to make certain remarks, and then Taylor had lost his temper, and set upon him just before school."

"Well, why do they go on now then?"

"Why, you see, they were parted then, and it was

settled for them by others that they should fight it out after twelve."

"And Anderson, I suppose, has no wish to get off it, and Taylor is ashamed to."

"That's it."

There are some boys at every school who will never lose the opportunity of encouraging the display of what is known in higher circles as the "noble science." It is not that they are great pugilists themselves, for many of those who are so jealous of the honour of others would shrink from all idea of a fight for themselves ; but it is that they have a sort of rejoicing in seeing the blows and the violence while their own persons are not mixed up in it, and it becomes the nearest approach to being in a fight consistently with their own safety. Some of these had undoubtedly got hold of Anderson, and instead of allowing the matter to drop, had encouraged him to make it a comparatively serious business, by fighting it out afterwards in Sixpenny. It was not often that there was such a regularly determined and formal affair, for boys are generally averse to fighting in cold blood, and usually get over their disputes during the heat of passion ; but that was the more reason why the chance of getting up such a thing should not be allowed to drop, and instead of a quiet dispute, it had been raised almost into the importance of a public meeting.

Sixpenny was a corner of the playing fields devoted in the summer to cricket, and supported by a subscription, the amount of which had originally given its name to the place. It was also the place where from time immemorial—all pitched battles had been regularly fought, and was therefore, of course, to be the scene of the event of to-

day. When we got on to the ground there was already a considerable crowd scattered about, but neither of the combatants had yet made their appearance. They were not long, however, in coming, for their backers, who were eager not to miss the school races, would allow them little delay. Each came with a small band of adherents, and followed at a more respectful distance by the crowd,



whom mere curiosity had attracted ; and no sooner were they on the ground than a species of ring was formed by the spectators, and the two stood with their jackets off waiting to begin.

All encounters of this sort are very much the same, and the description of one fight might do for all. It is needless, therefore, to go over what can be so much

better told by a professional hand ; and as Trevor remarked to me afterwards, if any one wishes to know the full particulars of what took place, let him read the last account in "Bell's Life" of the glorious set-to between the Putney Pet and the Swansea Smasher, substituting for such high-sounding names the simpler and more intelligible ones of Taylor and Anderson.

What the end of it was may at once be chronicled. There happened to be two Sixth Form not very far off, one of whom was Seymour, the captain of my dame's. They had seen the commencement of the fight, but so long as neither was doing the other much harm, had appeared to take but little notice of it. However, when the signs of cut lips and broken noses seemed to urge that enough had been done for the honour of both parties, they considered it their duty to interfere, and by virtue of the power which was given them came up to separate the combatants and disperse the crowd. Neither Taylor nor Anderson was very sorry to leave off. The spectators were those who felt the interruption most, but there was nothing to be done, and we consoled ourselves that we should, at all events, be in good time for the running.

"What a bore it was, those fellows coming and stopping it," said Trevor, as we walked away.

"Yes ; but it was rather good of them not doing so before."

"I don't see that. They oughtn't to have interfered at all."

"Well, you know, they are always told to stop that sort of thing. And if a master had come by, and seen them quietly looking on, it would have been uncommonly awkward."

"There's no doubt about that. I should have laughed to see Seymour caught."

"So should I," I answered, laughing. "Look, there he goes; they are both going down towards the Sanatorium."

"That's what we'll do too," said Trevor. "Everybody seems to be going there."

"All right, come along. I wonder if Anderson will go."

"Sure to. He wouldn't miss it for the world, and he's not so much damaged as to want nursing."

"No; I don't know how that was. Do you think he really had a little the best of it?"

"I don't know that," answered Trevor. "Perhaps he may have; but he certainly showed fewer marks about him, unless it was Taylor's ugly face that made everything appear so much worse."

"He's not beautiful, certainly. Did you remark how few people there were backing him up?"

"Yes; all the shouts were for Anderson."

"I was so glad of it; of course you were for him?"

"Well," he said, "I didn't shout at all for either, but I certainly wanted Anderson to get the best."

Everybody had left the playing fields when the excitement was over, and we were all walking down leisurely towards the scene of the races. The little knot of admirers that had accompanied each hero to the ground were now engaged with even more solicitude in conducting them back from it; but though peace had been made, and it had been agreed not to renew the fight, harmony was not so entirely restored as to prevent the two parties keeping at a respectful distance from each other, and choosing opposite sides of the road.

It happened just as we thought. Taylor turned in to his tutor's, while Anderson proceeded in a sort of ovation down Keate's Lane and towards the railway. The little crowd that followed him, however, was soon merged in the big crowd that had collected on the Eton Wick road to see the result of the racing struggles that were to take place. The grass meadow just on this side of the railway viaduct was to be the winning post, if one may call it so, for the mile race which was just going to be run. The course was along the high road, beginning at exactly a mile's distance from this point ; and as few had the wish, and still fewer again the power, to run all the way with the race, almost the whole school had congregated on this spot, where they might see the final result with the least amount of exertion to themselves.

"We'll stop here," I said to Trevor, as we got on to the grass, and found ourselves close to many of our friends.

"Oh, yes ; I've no intention of going any farther," was his answer. "When are they going to start ?" he continued, turning to some bystander.

"Why, they ought to have started at half-past twelve, but it's twenty minutes to one now."

"Well, and how many were going to run ?"

"The first two of each heat. There were three heats, you know, yesterday, and so there will be six starters to-day."

"Hallo, Norton !" said Darrell, coming up. "What are you going to do ? Wait here ?"

"I think so ; what are you ?"

"I think I shall just go as far as the railway, and see if they are coming. You come too."

"I don't mind."

So we left Trevor and his friend, and walked on through the crowd towards the viaduct ; but scarcely had we got there, when the sight of one or two boys flying along the road from the Sanatorium, warned us that the race was at hand.

"Who'll you back," said Darrell, "before they come in sight?"

"Why, Talbot ; I should think he was sure to win."

"Well, I don't mind taking Grove against him for half-a-crown."

"All right. I'll do it," I said. "I shall win my half-crown."

"Will you indeed?" he said, for they just now came round the corner. "Look who's a-head."

"Well, but Talbot's close behind. I'll tell you what, it will be a very near thing ; let's run on to get a good place for the finish."

"Wait a bit, I want to see them a little nearer," said Darrell.

"If you get into the squash you won't be able to get on at all. Come on now."

"All right, I will ; but look here now, how close they are all together."

"Well, then, come on, that we may see who really comes in first."

"Oh, look ! there's Barker and Gresby both coming up."

"Well, I shall see the finish and you won't, that's the end of it. I'm off."

"So am I," he said ; but still did not move. Grove was almost opposite where we were, with Talbot close

behind him, so without waiting any longer, I at once ran off as fast as I could, and got as near as possible to the post in order to see the result. Nor was I sorry that I had not waited any longer. There was a general rush made toward the judge's place at the end of the course, and everybody, anticipating a hard struggle, closed round, so that none but those who had been early in securing their places could get a station in the front rank.

On they came, just as we expected, all well up together, but Grove still leading. The pace at the end seemed to revive, all put on a "spurt," and seemed determined to come in with some show of gameness; but the last ones were already too much done to be able to help themselves out of their hinder position. Talbot made a good struggle, and for a yard or so really looked as if he was going to save my half-crown; but he soon died off, and Grove, who had more power left in him than any of the rest, came in the winner by eight or ten yards. Talbot was second, but close upon his heels came Barker and Gresby, contending so hard for the honour of third place, that in the end it was pronounced a dead heat between them.

"Well, old fellow," said Darrell, as I met him in the crowd afterwards, "you've lost half-a-crown."

"How do you know? I don't believe you saw who came in first."

"Perhaps I didn't, but I heard, which is the same thing; and I got some one to give me an account of the whole race, which I am sure you know nothing about."

"I don't; so you had better tell me. What was it?"

"Well, after all it was tolerably simple. All I know

is that Richards went off with the lead, which he kept as far as the cottages. There he most unaccountably gave up altogether, and Grove and Talbot came on much in the same position as when we first saw them."

"So there was nothing very exciting in it."

"No, I don't think there was. The hurdle race will be better fun."

"I want to know how it is they have the two things on one day. They don't usually."

"I know they don't," he said. "I suppose it's getting so near the end of the half that they want to get it over. Do you know how that is, Martin?" he added, as the latter joined us.

"No, I don't; but I dare say it's as you say. It's coming off at once, isn't it?"

"Yes; don't you see the movement is beginning towards the meadow? There are the hurdles."

"Come along, then," I said, "there's nothing more to be seen here."

So we shifted our position to about a couple of hundred yards further off, where the rows of hurdles indicated that the second scene of the day's amusement was to take place. There was the same crush of spectators, and the same eagerness with those who were not positively engaged in running; but the actual contest was somewhat more amusing to idlers like ourselves than the last. In the first place, it was shorter, which enabled us to have a general view of the whole from beginning to end, and then also it was pleasingly diversified by the falls which the hurdles occasioned, and the general difficulty which many seemed to experience in clearing them.

"It is certainly more amusing looking at a hurdle race than a mile race," said Martin, as we walked away.

"Ah! but it's not half such a great thing in reality as the mile race. The fellow who wins the mile gets a much better prize, and is much more thought of than the winner of a hurdle race."

"It takes so much more out of a fellow," said Darrell. "He has to train for it, and then it's uncommonly hard work running a mile."

"Yes; that's true enough," said Martin. "The hurdle race brings out light and active fellows, and the mile is more for real strength and power of staying."

"It's the last bit of running we shall see for a long time," I observed.

"Yes, isn't that jolly? I mean the holidays being so close," said Darrell.

"Yes; and then we shall have the summer half, and the 4th of June."

"And by the 4th of June," I added, "I shall be no longer a Lower Boy."

END OF PART I.



P A R T I I.

CHAPTER I.

CHANGES.

“ The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
The months will add themselves and make the years.”

Guinevere.

THE summer came and went, and so did three succeeding summers ; but when the last of these had gone, and September had again come round, I knew that I was entering upon what was to be the last year of my school-life.

Many were the changes which had taken place since the day when I looked forward so eagerly to being no longer a Lower boy. Since that time I had gone through the Lower and Middle Divisions of the Fifth Form, and thanks to having taken a tolerably high place in Upper Division trials, was now very close upon Sixth Form. Only three remained between the Oppidan Decemvirate and myself, and as the Doctor always took those at the head of the Fifth Form into his own division, I found myself promoted to a permanent seat in the flogging room, instead of being only an occasional and reluctant visitor there.

Then, too, there were great changes in the circle of

my own acquaintances. Almost all with whom I had formerly been intimate had left, and I felt as if I had somewhat outlived my generation. Trevor and Darrell were nearly the sole survivors of those whom I had originally known. Martin had gone a year before to Oxford. Both the Farrants and both the Browns had long left, to enter upon business or the army. The Seymours of course were gone, and Dyke, who had been my first companion in fagging for them, had left some two years before, disgusted perhaps with the ridicule which the innocence of his ways excited. Carron, indeed, was still at my dame's, but we had never been very intimate with each other; and so, though we were always good friends, I had never looked upon him with any particular regard.

These vacancies at my dame's had of course been filled up by new-comers, most of whom were naturally little fellows coming to Eton for the first time; but others were by no means of such tender years. It had so happened that one of the masters had been elected to a vacant fellowship, and it therefore became necessary for him to give up his house, as he could no longer receive boarders or continue his work as a master. A number of boys were thus turned loose, as it were, on to the College, and had to get themselves taken in by the new tutors or dames whom they might select. There was thus a sprinkling of them in nearly every house, and my dame's being somewhat a favourite place, had got six of them in at once. Such an infusion of new blood had of course altered our community a good deal, more especially as the in-comers belonged to all parts of the school, from Clinton, who was now captain of my dame's, down to his younger brother, who was somewhere

at the top of Lower school. However, it was certainly an advantage getting them, for they strengthened our football and cricket eleven amazingly, and thus brought the house into greater credit with the whole school.

There was certainly a great deal of difference between my present life and the old days when I had a room with Martin and messed with the Farrants. Now I had a room to myself, and no longer messed with any one ; now I had a couple of fags, who were more than sufficient to do the work I wanted, instead of having myself to make the toast and boil the milk for others ; and now, too, I had acquired a certain amount of personal dignity from my position in the school, which the scrambling and dirty little Remove or Fourth Form boy could never have attained to. The various masters whom I had any intercourse with treated me with consideration ; and with Mr. Argles and Mrs. Seely I was more on the footing of a friend than of an ordinary house boarder. Thus I was elevated in position, and as I perceived more and more my own importance, I became more and more anxious to do nothing which might lessen it, and so determined to avoid getting into any scrapes which were unbefitting the dignity of so exalted a personage as I felt myself to be.

It is certainly a good thing that boys should have some such pride in themselves and their reputation, for it will preserve them from many little slips which they would otherwise fall into. If a boy becomes jealous of his own honour, feeling that he has a character and a position to keep up, that idea within him will work more for his good than all the lectures and examples which teachers can set before him. It is this that makes Eton

boys what they are ; they learn to respect themselves, and so to have a lively sense of what is upright and gentlemanlike. Nor can tutors ever act better for the formation of character than the Eton masters have hitherto done. As a boy rises in the school he requires to be treated with more consideration, and what he has to say ought to receive attention. Thus, as some importance is attached to him, he begins to think he is a responsible person, and so is more careful as to his own conduct. And there is no fear that a boy will become conceited under such treatment. He cannot do so at Eton, where he is but one among the crowd of his own standing, who all receive the same consideration as himself. It would be a different thing were such treatment confined only to a few at the very top of the school, or were some definite amount of responsibility put into their hands, with instructions for the use of their delegated power ; then even a fine spirit might become a conceited tyrant. But where all are gradually drawing towards the same point, and where the difference between each age and rank is shaded off almost imperceptibly by the exercise of a judicious tact, no one boy or class of boys ever can declare they are above the other. And in the same way the vagueness of the privileges and duties of the Sixth Form, while it encourages boys to feel that there is a certain weight attached to them, prevents them most effectually from any undue presumption, by feeling also that they have no sure grounds on which to rest their pretensions.

I was talking to Waller one day about these changes, and how quick the time seemed to have passed since he first taught me how to make toast.

"Yes," he answered, "but I don't know that I should wish all that time back again. It would be well enough to be given three or four more years at Eton, but I shouldn't care to become a Lower boy again. I should like always to stop as I am, with all one's friends about one."

"The fact is, the longer one stays here the more one likes it. You know it's uncommonly jolly for us now, very fairly independent, no pupil room, and no great amount of work to do."

"Yes, and I think we're excessively lucky in the fellows at my dame's now. A great many of course have gone, but this other lot has just come in to make up for those that had left."

"I like them all," I said; "don't you?"

"Well, yes. What do you think of Clinton?"

"Oh, I like him very well. He's so shy, you know, that unless one sees a good deal of him, he appears a little overbearing."

"He does. One would have thought that a fellow like him would have got over all that feeling."

"He hasn't, certainly. But he is a great gain to my dame's for this half."

"Yes, and so is Pryor."

"Pryor helps us in the cricket amazingly, doesn't he?"

"I like him the best of the lot," said Waller.

"Now isn't that 'talk of the devil?'" I remarked, for just at that moment Pryor ran up the stairs, and came down the passage towards the room in which we were sitting.

"Hallo, where are you rushing to?" I said.

"To change for a match at the wall," he answered.
"Are you coming to see it?"

"No, I am going to play in my dame's game. But look here, I want to know if you are in for the Albert to-morrow."

"No, I am not," he answered, as he turned into his own room next door, "but Clinton is."

I knew that, but hoped Pryor might have been in also, for many of us, myself among the rest, had only put our names down for the sake of the change of work which it gave us, and for the whole holiday which was to come when all was over. "The Albert" was an examination in modern languages, which received its name from the fact that it had been founded by Prince Albert, who had given yearly prizes for the best French, German, or Italian scholars in the school. Some of course went in with the hope of getting the prize, which, if I recollect right, was something like ten pounds' worth of books ; but most of us were actuated by no such ambitious motives, and numberless were the idlers who thus managed to get off a week of the ordinary school-work by parading the little scraps of French or German which they knew.

It was indeed a curious assemblage which I met next day, waiting outside the library door, within which the examination was to be conducted. The French prize, for which I was a candidate, always brought together a greater field of competitors than either of the other languages, from the fact of its being the most universally known ; and on the present occasion there were hardly fewer than fifty of us, who were all eager to show their proficiency in a living tongue, after so many monotonous weeks spent upon the dead ones. Lower boys as well as Sixth Form crowded round ; for the school distinctions based upon Latin and Greek were rendered completely

useless, now that the examination was to be in something beyond the ordinary course ; and though a boy of eighteen might naturally have a superior knowledge of the ancient writers, it was very probable that on such a thing as modern languages he might find his equal even at the very bottom of Fourth Form. A general medley of great and small, respectable and reprobate, was the result ; and in this crowd almost the only two that I knew were Clinton and Carron, both of whom really thought that they had a very fair chance of success.

“ Well, it’s cold, isn’t it, standing here ?” said Clinton.

“ I should think it was ; they might just as well let us in at once. I say, we must secure seats by the fire.”

“ Yes,” said Carron, “ that’s the best of being in the library ; you get a carpet and a fire at all events, which you don’t get in the schoolrooms.”

“ Come on, here’s the door going to open.”

“ Let’s all stick together and make for the far end at once.”

“ That’s all right,” said Clinton, as we rushed up towards the fireplace, and secured the three nearest seats to it that there were.

“ Fancy, we’ve got the old desks that they used to give us in Upper School for trials.”

“ Yes, they come in useful for all sorts of things ; but they don’t improve the look of the library, do they ?”

“ No, that they don’t,” I answered. “ It’s really a very good room in its natural state.”

There was no doubt of that ; size and height combined to give it an appearance which would have done no discredit to the library of any gentleman’s house. It was not the regular college library which we were in. That

was under the peculiar protection of the Provost and Fellows, and of course contained far greater treasures than the boys' library, which was the one in which we now were ; but still in spite of our being in a room only of secondary importance, we found it remarkably comfortable, and the contrast which it presented to the bare whitewashed walls of the ordinary schoolrooms, no doubt helped to heighten its appearance. The door we had come in at was one of two which were both at the end towards the playing fields, separated, however, by a painted window, under which reclined a statue of the Dying Gladiator. Straight opposite at the further end was the fireplace, surmounted by wooden panelling carved with the arms and supporters of the college, and shelves of books filled up the sides and the rest of the circumference of the room. The light was supplied by windows in what might be called the top story, that is to say, just above the gallery, which ran round at about half way up the height of the wall, and this helped to give a good effect by not breaking in upon the solid line of books which ran all round below. The general appearance, as I had remarked, was in reality a very good one, especially when the room was not crowded with small deal tables ranged in parallel lines, but could show a little more space and irregularity of outline.

"I have scarcely ever been in here before," said Clinton, as we sat and waited for the dilatory examiner to bring us our papers.

"Nor have I," said Carron. "Have you, Norton?"

"Very seldom. It's the Tugs that use it most : whenever I have been in here, I have never seen anything but black gowns."

"I believe it's a good library, though."

"Yes," said Carron. "But don't you see, Oppidans won't take the trouble to come and look out things, or read at such a distance from their tutors, whereas it's quite close to the Tugs."

"Yes. I wonder if this fellow ever intends to give us any papers?"

"I don't know; who is he?"

"Oh, he's Monsieur Delille, who has written all sorts of French grammars and things."

"He looks like it, I am sure. I say, look at the Gladiator."

"Oh, that's rather good," they both said, laughing. "Who has put his hat on?"

"Well, it's a very good hat-peg," I answered. "That's old Evans's doing, you know."

"What, the statue?"

"Yes; Evans the drawing master. He's very good, I believe, at those sort of plaster models. Here come our papers."

Silence now became the order of the day, and we each took the printed paper that was handed to us, and began looking it over before setting down to work upon it. There were three or four tolerably long extracts from French writers to be translated, and then followed a few questions as to the different meanings of words spelt in the same way, and as to the employment of the accents. On the whole it struck me as being tolerably easy, and I whispered my opinion to Carron, who, however, only answered by pointing to the last sentence of one of the extracts. I had only taken a rapid glance over the whole paper, and had not observed that after a long

description of the south of France, the writer wound up by a list of its products, and the French words for hemp, flax, wheat, rye, barley, oats, and numberless other things, staggered me not a little as I read them.

The paper, however, was at length got over, and after ten minutes' interval for coffee and bread and butter at half-past eight, we proceeded to work upon a second one, which occupied us pretty nearly till a quarter to ten, when we were dismissed. The work in the afternoon was less severe than the morning, for we had had to go in again at eleven, but were free for the day after four o'clock ; and so, on the whole, as we sat before the fire in the evening, instead of going in to five o'clock school, we congratulated ourselves on having so pleasingly varied our routine of work.

"I think it is a great mistake," said Clinton, "not letting French form part of the school-work."*

"I am sure I think so," I said, "now that it is an extra, and that boys, if they learn it at all, must learn it during play-hours. It is very natural to find that few go to the French master at all."

"And the consequence is that when a fellow leaves Eton, he knows, perhaps, a little Latin and Greek, but nothing that can be of any use to him when he mixes with living people."

"Yes," said Clinton, "and I have met young fellows abroad who couldn't speak a word of any language but their own, and they really do look such fools."

"I really don't see," said Carron, "why they shouldn't make it part of the regular work."

* Since this chapter was written, modern languages have, as I understand, been made part of the regular school-work.

"Oh, they say that it would lessen the study of Latin and Greek."

"That's all nonsense. French three hours a week could do no harm."

"Or even one hour a week," I suggested, "would be better than nothing."

"Yes, but they won't do it," said Clinton.

"I suppose the same care for Latin and Greek prevented mathematics from being part of the school-work till lately."

"I shouldn't wonder. But now they have got mathematics, I don't see why they shouldn't take in modern languages also."

"Yes, but as they didn't see their mistake there for a long time, they may be as long here."

It certainly is a great pity that the study of French and German is not more encouraged at Eton than it is. Such ignorance, besides being a source of discomfort, is often also of positive disadvantage. There really ought to be no reason why a boy who leaves school with a wish to enter the diplomatic service should be, of necessity, obliged to go abroad to acquire the tongues which he ought to have learnt. But very few would attempt an examination without such preparation, for either they have never learnt a language at all, or else, if they have, it has been in their childhood, and the neglect of it during schoolboy days has caused it all to vanish. Then, too, why should Eton, which professes to turn out the best gentlemen of England, refuse to give any consideration to one of the most necessary elements of a gentlemanlike education? A man need not be a perfect linguist, but if he positively knows nothing he is looked

upon, at all events, as an exception, though not, perhaps, a discredit to his order.

Two more days finished our examination, and very soon afterwards the result was given out. Clinton was first, beating Carron, who had had some hopes of it himself; and I, much to my own surprise, was among those few mentioned with honour who were dignified by the name of the "select."

CHAPTER II.

COLLEGERS AND OPPIDANS.

“ Then foes advanced, or back were driven.”
Campbell.

THE great event of the football half was the match between Collegers and Oppidans which took place every year on the 30th of November. This was St. Andrew's day, and was therefore of course a whole holiday ; but besides this it had additional importance from being the special day for all Scotchmen to celebrate their patron saint, who was more reverenced, perhaps, at Eton than at any other school in the kingdom. St. Andrew, St. Patrick, and St. David, were all, indeed, honoured at Eton, and even promoted in our calendar to an equality of type and colour with the red letter saints. Then, too, there was a custom that the head master should on each of these days receive at breakfast all who could make out their claim to belong to the nationality of the patron, and the highest in rank of those who were thus invited had the peculiar felicity of presenting a badge worked in gold and silver lace, not only to the Doctor, with whom he was to breakfast, but also to the lower master, and to his tutor. The design of them was always left to the boy's own taste, or rather

to that of his parents ; but care was always taken to introduce the shamrock, the thistle, or the leek, according to the day which was to be celebrated.

It happened that on this occasion Darrell was the highest peer among his countrymen, and it became therefore his duty to prepare the list of those who were to be asked to breakfast, and also to provide the badges. The first part of the business was easy enough ; it is probable that he left out a good number of those who, as genuine Scotchmen, ought to have been invited, but at all events he made a better list than the Doctor himself could have done ; and after I had seen my own name put down in safety, I gave myself no trouble about any one else's. The badges were a more difficult matter ; he had sent up to town to order them, and they had been faithfully promised at least a week before the actual day ; but the week passed by and no parcel came, and even on the very morning of the 30th, when Darrell went into school, they had not arrived.

"I can't make this out at all, Norton," he said, as I met him in the school-yard. "These badges haven't come yet."

"What are you going to do then?"

"I don't know what to do. They ought to have been sent round last night, so that the Doctor could have worn his in school this morning."

"Well, perhaps they may come by this morning's post. It's a saying lesson you know, now, so let's walk up to the post-office as soon as we're out."

"Very well, we both say early, and we'll ask there."

Luckily for our peace of mind, the postmaster had that morning received the long delayed parcel directed

to Darrell ; and it was with no small satisfaction that it was carried down on its way to my tutor's.

"I'm awfully glad it's here at last," he said. "It didn't matter the Doctor not having it for early school, but if he had had to call absence without it, fellows would have thought it awfully odd of me."

"It would have been a bore, too, going to breakfast with him without it," I added.

"So it would ; but now they're here let's go in to my tutor's and have a look at them."

"All right, it's not half-past eight yet, so there's lots of time."

"I'll tell you what," he said, after we had got into his room and had opened the paper, "it strikes me they are much too big."

"Oh, I don't think so. You know they look nothing on the black gown ; it's not as if they were worn when he is in plain clothes."

"What should you say they were ?" he asked.

"Well, not more than three inches by two."

"That's what I ordered them to be, so I suppose they must do. How happy St. Andrew looks crucified in the midst of thistles."

"I think they're uncommonly good ones. What do they make you pay for them ?"

"Why, they're six pound apiece, so they ought to be good."

"I should think so," I said. "It's a frightful price."

"Well, you know what my tutor said last year when I gave him one."

"No ; what was it ?"

"Well, he said. 'I must thank you for giving it me,

but I am sorry you have done so. Foolish things,' he added, 'very foolish. I shall put it away in a drawer as a remembrance, but I can't wear it.'"

"That was it, was it?"

"Yes, I suppose he thought it an unnecessary waste of money."

"Well, the Doctor and the Lower Master wear it happily enough."

"Yes, but that reminds me that they won't do so to-day unless I make haste and send them off. It's getting on for absence time."

Each badge was accordingly wrapped up again in its silver paper, and a messenger despatched to carry them to the different houses. That they had arrived safe we soon had ocular demonstration, for on going to absence about a quarter of an hour later, we saw the Doctor emerge from his chambers under the colonnade, wearing the little medallion of thistles. Everybody answered as usual, Darrell and myself lifting our hats as our names were called from the chapel steps; but as we were going to breakfast almost immediately it was not worth while going back to our houses, and so we waited about in the school-yard till the whole thing was over.

Others were doing the same thing and for the same reason as ourselves; and we were intensely amused at hearing of one fellow of the name of Jackson, who had hardly had time to arrange his habiliments before absence on account of a visit to the switching room, but who yet intended the moment afterwards to take advantage of the invitation to breakfast which had reached him overnight.

"Of course I shall go," he said, in answer to some one who questioned the propriety of such a thing. "Of

course I shall go, and you'll see the Doctor will shake hands as if nothing had happened."

"Well, come along then," we said, "we'll all go together."

By this time it was half-past nine, and the Doctor had gone back to his house. We judged, therefore, that the hour had come to present ourselves at his table. The back door was the one we entered by, for, as I had found out very early in life, boys were never allowed to approach the front one. Up a passage between two walls, that of the head master's garden and that of his neighbour's, and then we came to a door which let us into the inner premises, such as back staircase, kitchen, and pantry. The servant was, of course, expecting us, and as soon as Darrell had come forward to the front, and the rest of us had formed a promiscuous tail behind, we were ushered along the passage, and eventually made our appearance at the dining-room door.

"Good-morning," said the Doctor, with a smile, and shook hands with each of us as we came in, not excepting Jackson, who was treated exactly as the rest. "Darrell," he called out, as that individual was moving towards the end of the room, "you must take care of the lady of the house."

And accordingly Darrell took his place at the right hand of the top of the table. The rest seized the chair that happened to be nearest to each of them, and the feast began.

There was one thing very certain, and which we all knew of: that if the head master asked any one to breakfast with him, he was sure to give him a good one. There was always a profusion, and everything was well

done. This was the case even with his private breakfasts, however small might be the party ; and, of course, when there was such a number of us as on St. Andrew's day, the preparations for it and the results would naturally be greater. The table was really most bountifully supplied, and to the eyes of a small boy, who had never seen any of the almost Elizabethan breakfasts which so many indulge in, it must have seemed more like a dinner than a morning meal. Eating certainly was the great occupation of the whole party, and this, perhaps, may have helped to make the conversation so little general as it was. The two ends, or at least their respective presidents, were heard occasionally, but always in disjointed utterances, as though no subject could be sustained through more than two questions and answers ; while down the sides of the table were nothing but whispered dialogues between each boy and his next neighbour. The fact was that the natural awe felt by most of the boys for the Doctor prevented their speaking ; and in spite of his good-natured efforts to draw every one out, it was only with a few that happened to be more accustomed to him, from being in his own division, that he could get on at all.

"What do you prophesy of the match, Norton ?" he asked, for I happened to be sitting within two of him.

"Well, sir, I think it will be a very close thing ; but Oppidans ought to win."

"You have the advantage of greater numbers to choose your eleven from," he remarked.

"But they have the advantage over us, again, sir, by their constant practice at the wall."

"That is very true, also."

"Yes, sir, we could beat them easily enough in the field," put in Fraser, who was a Sixth Form sitting on the opposite side.

"Well, I must say I like an even match," said the Doctor.

"Oh, yes, sir," said Fraser, "provided always it's not a tie."

"That is disappointing to both parties, perhaps." And then the Doctor turned to ask some shy little Fourth Form about his mother, and try to make him talk on home, since he could not do so on football.

The same sort of thing was going on at the top of the table, except that Darrell, who had sat there once or twice before, was perfectly at his ease, and helped wonderfully in promoting conversation and amusement. Thus our breakfast passed off pleasantly enough ; we were a long time over it, and even after all were satisfied we still sat on, because no one would be the first to move. At last the sleepy sound of the bell ringing for church at ten minutes to eleven made it a matter of necessity to rise ; and when Darrell had made his adieu, all the rest followed him, and then he and I strolled back leisurely to wait outside the door of the chapel till the clock should be on the point of striking, and then to rush in as though we wished to be taken for Provost or Fellows, who were sure to be following within a yard or two of our backs.

The moment church was over every one rushed to the playing fields, to see the match which created so much excitement. Not that it was going to begin so early, but that there was nothing else to do, and all wished to

be in good time, and to have some opportunity of mixing with the crowd that was sure to be assembled on the ground. Carron and I had got together as we came down the steps from the ante-chapel, and we intended to accompany each other, at all events, as far as the playing fields. As we crossed the school-yard a third friend joined us, and so we all proceeded together towards the scene of combat. Lovell, who had thus met us, was one of our own division, but remarkably shy, and, consequently, not of very many acquaintances. Those who did know him liked him very fairly. He was a bit of a dandy, and had a lazy languor about him which prevented him ever making great athletic exertions ; but he was by no means a stupid fellow, and after he had properly cared for himself, would be as good-natured to every one else as could be wished. For my own part, I liked him very well, and was glad when he joined us, for I intended to keep him as a companion during the whole of that after twelve.

“I suppose you are on your way to the playing fields,” he said, as he turned to walk alongside of us.

“Yes, and I suppose you are going there too ?”

“Yes, but there will be nothing going on yet,” he answered.

“There’s sure to be kickabout,” I remarked, “if there’s nothing else.”

“Perhaps there will ; it’s a fine day, so one can afford to wait.”

“A good day for broken bones, don’t you think ?” said Carron.

“What, you mean this frost with the hard ground ?”

“Yes,” he said ; “they’ll be as brittle as possible to-day.”

"Well, I hope nobody will get damaged."

"I am sure I don't wish them," we both replied. "But let's get hold of one of these balls that are flying about."

Kickabout was indeed being carried on most vigorously. Almost every house seemed to have sent its ball, and these were flying over our heads in every direction that the chance kicks had sent them. The whole of Sixpenny was covered by a promiscuous multitude, who were thus passing their time till the commencement of the match should draw near. As greater crowds approached, and as strange visitors appeared on the scene, they narrowed the circle of their amusements, and kept drawing back in deference to those who came to see the match, but not to participate in the intermediate amusements. At last the gathering of the Oppidan eleven became a signal for the cessation of all minor occupations, and every one crowded round to gaze upon and to applaud the champions of their party.

The game at the wall which was to be played to-day was as different to what we were accustomed in the field as any two games at football could be. In the field we had a whole extent of meadow before us, pretty nearly as broad as it was long ; but at the wall there was but a narrow strip, scarcely fifteen yards in width, and this too ran straight along the wall which divided the playing fields from the Slough road, and gave its name to the game we were about to look on at. The consequence was, that the bully at first starting could not possibly take place in open ground, but had to be formed up against the wall ; and then, as there was a constant dread that every kick might send the ball out—that is to say, beyond the line marked as the limit within

which they were to play—the game became more a constant melée, in which small kicks and shins predominated, than a regular display of speed or science such as could be seen and appreciated in the ordinary field matches.

“I’m glad I’m not going to play to-day,” said Lovell.

“Why so?” I asked.

“Because I’ve not the slightest wish to get shinned in the way those fellows will be.”

“Well, I must say,” I answered, “I wish I was to be one of them.”

“The Tugs look much the heaviest,” he continued.

“Yes, you know, but that’s unwholesome fat. Our fellows are much more active.”

“I hope so. I bet you we’re beaten, though.”

“Oh, nonsense,” I said. “It may be a tie, but it won’t be anything worse than that. Look how well they are forming down.”

“They look pretty solid.”

“Yes, look at Linwood against the wall, backing up our post; and there’s Clinton as flying man, ready to take the ball the moment it comes out of the bully.”

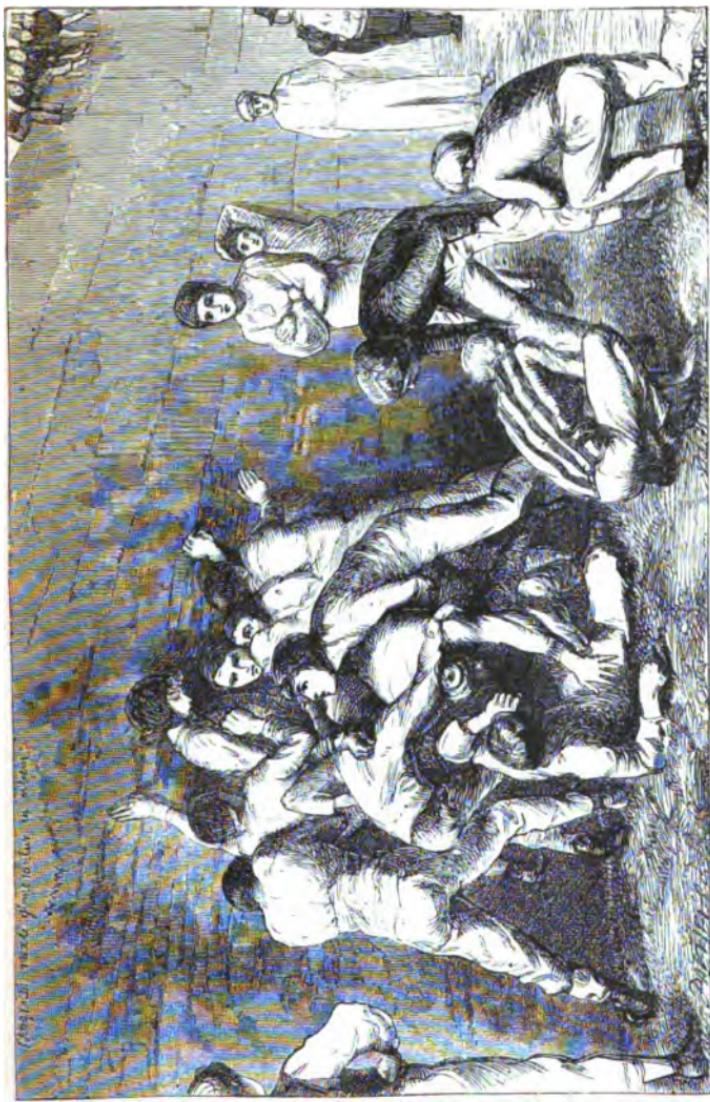
“He does very well for that,” said Lovell, “with his light body and long legs, which reach everywhere.”

“Yes. And there’s Pryor out behind.”

“He can kick well enough if he likes.”

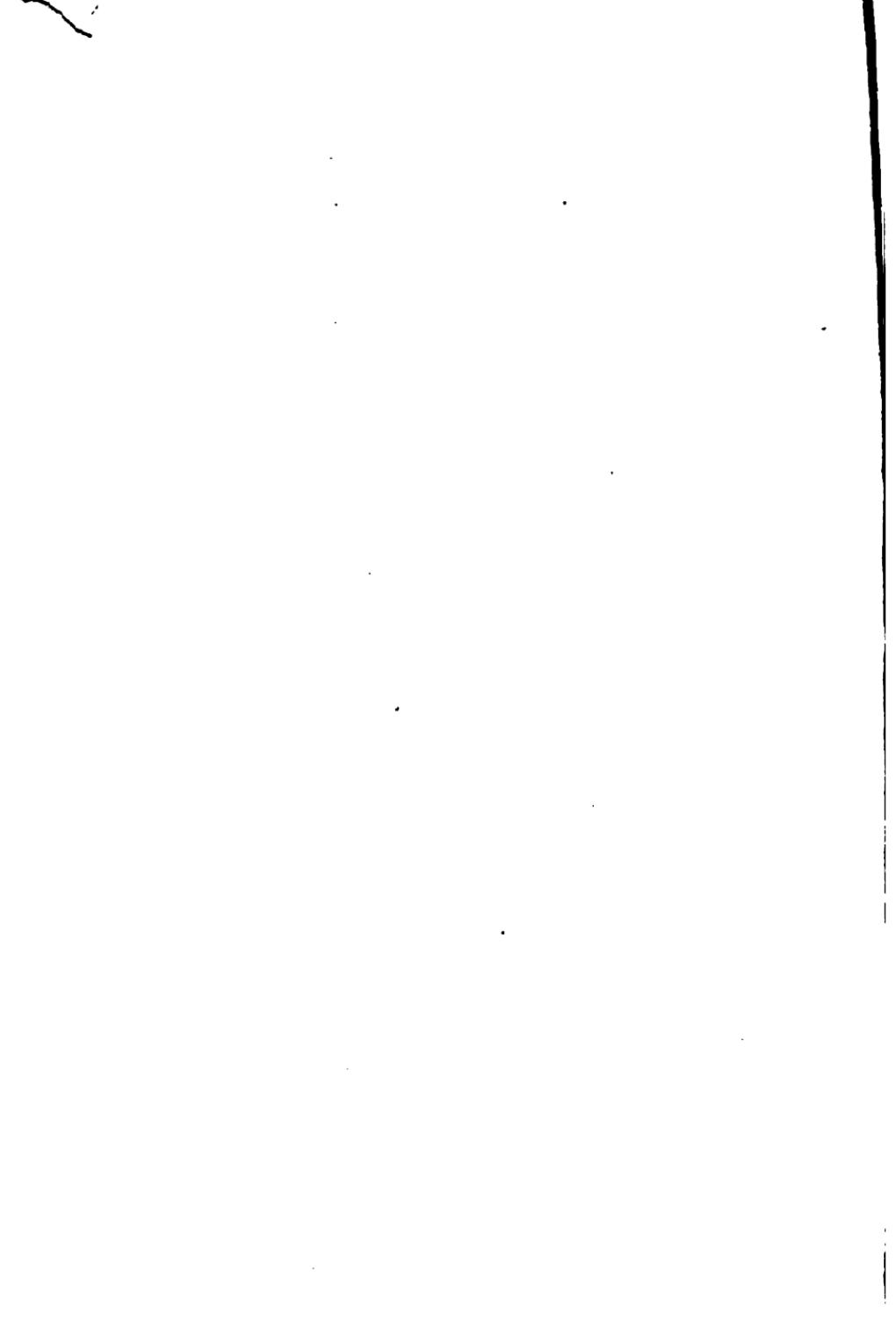
“But he’s rather lazy.”

Precisely as the half-hour struck the ball was placed between the two rival groups of Collegers and Oppidans. All closed upon it at once, and instead of the order and regularity which was before apparent, it became one contorted group, huddled together, and twined one with another by means of arms and legs, as though it were



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AT THE WALL.



intended that none should ever escape from it. The ball itself was, of course, totally invisible to the line of spectators ; one could only guess at its whereabouts by the direction of the fierce kicks which some of those standing outside lavished on their prostrate enemies. No mercy indeed was shown by one side to the other ; the old antagonism between Tugs and Oppidans was too deeply rooted in the hearts of each party to let them forego this opportunity of paying off any little debts of hatred ; and those in each eleven who happened to be lower down in the school, and who had not yet learned to appreciate the social qualities of their adversaries, fully kept up the character for ferocity which the annual contest had obtained. At last the ball emerged from the living heap which had covered it. A rush was at once made upon it by those outside, but after a short interchange of kicks it was driven beyond the boundary, and the bully had again to be reformed a little lower and towards the Colleger's end.

"That's what it always is," said Lovell. "An endless succession of bullies and shinning, but nothing more."

"Ah, but it's working gradually down towards their end. You like better looking at the arrivals."

"Well, I have been doing so lately. There are a tremendous number of old Etonians about."

"It's 'a great day for them,' I answered ; "such a quantity come down from Oxford. Martin said he should be here."

"Yes, there are a good many. There goes the Doctor with his badge, talking to a lot of them."

"He doesn't see much of the match, I expect ; but perhaps he doesn't care, as it's so equal."

They had been working and fighting hard for nearly half an hour, and still neither side had obtained any result. The ball had of course varied in its position, but had generally found its way towards the Colleger's end, so that the advantage might be said to be slightly on our side, but nothing which could be counted for us had been obtained. The clock soon struck one, and then came the time for changing goals, in order to neutralize the little advantage which one or the other might have from wind or position. It was now our turn to fight towards the end nearest the town, and manfully did our eleven work their way. Linwood was seen like a giant rushing on with the ball in front of him, but before he could get to the wished-for end some one had turned it away out of the boundary, and the bully had to be re-formed. Another and more successful effort, however, carried it on in spite of opposition, and before the enemy had time to prevent him it was within calx and he had got a shy.

"I say, that's a shy," I said. "Look out, there it goes. Ah! it's no goal, they've stopped it," I added, as the ball fell dead to the ground.

It would be almost hopeless to attempt to explain the mysteries of the game. It is one of those things which must be seen, and even then the necessary preliminaries for a "shy" at goals are often only visible to the umpire, owing to the confusion of the struggle. As the match went on, and as the ball time after time became the centre of successive bullies, and was hid beneath the writhing forms of those who were contending for it, our comments on the game became often mere guesses, from the uncertainty in which the equal struggles of the two

sides left us. But as the time wore on, we saw that every effort only met with fresh resistance; each bully that was formed was still no nearer to either goal; and it seemed as if both sides had resolutely determined that no further advantage should be gained.

"There'll be nothing more," said Lovell, as we began to weary of the monotonous course of such even play. "There goes the quarter. Neither side will get anything more, I expect."

His prediction was right. The rest of the time was consumed in ineffectual struggles, and the double stroke of the half-hour put an end to the most exciting match of the year, leaving Oppidans the winners by one shy to nothing.

The crowd now seemed gradually to disperse, and scatter itself over the grass or in the streets. The elevens were glad enough to get home as quickly as they could, and the masters all returned to their houses to prepare for the two o'clock dinner. But visitors and boys remained on the ground, discussing the various incidents of the match, and hazarding many a conjecture as to how the various legs of the combatants had suffered. There was no one very near me whom I wished particularly to see, and so, as Lovell had left me to go home with his tutor, I thought the best thing would be to go straight back to my dame's, and get a full account from Pryor, who was in the opposite room to my own.

"How are you?" was my first question, as I entered and found him changing his football garments for those of ordinary life.

"Oh, very flourishing," he answered. "I only got one bad shin."

“Who was that from?”

“I couldn’t see exactly, but rather suspect that brute Cousins. I paid him out however for it, if it was him.”

“And ain’t you rather done after it all?”

“Oh, no. It was rather hard work in those horrible crushes, and the heat was awful; but I’m getting to feel quite fresh again now.”

“That’s all right; you’ll be in time for absence, I suppose.”

“Yes,” he said. “Wait for me, will you?”

“Very good, I’ll be in my room.”

“All right, then; I’ll come there when I’m ready.”

CHAPTER III.

SPEECHES AND CONSTITUTIONALS.

“ Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
While the landscape round it measures.”

L'Allegro.

THERE was nothing much going on at the end of the half. All seemed to be growing slack as the holidays approached. Football had had its day ; most of the house matches had been played out ; and boys were beginning to get sick of what they had had so much of. In this state of things there was of course some difficulty in finding occupation for our after twelves. The field and the river were both closed to us—one from our own idleness, the other from the coldness of the weather. All that seemed to be left then was to saunter up town, or go for a regular constitutional along the roads which led into the country. This, indeed, was the only way in which we got any idea of the locality in which we lived ; and as I was never sorry to make an exploration when there was nothing better to be done, I readily accepted Trevor's proposition one morning that we should go out after twelve for a really long walk, as far, indeed, as our limited time would allow.

“ You know it's short church this morning, as it's not a saint's day.”

"Yes, but there are speeches," I said. "There always are on Founder's day."

"But church will be over by five-and-twenty minutes after eleven, and speeches can't last more than twenty minutes more."

"No, I suppose not."

"I wish we could shirk them," said Trevor. "You know fellows often slip out of chapel at the other door."

"I know they do," I answered; "but then you see I have got to stand up and keep order among the Lower boys, so I should be missed."

"That's one of the advantages you get by being in the Doctor's division. You are such a swell that you are missed directly."

"It is a bore, you know, only we shall have lots of time afterwards."

The door of the ante-chapel leading into the street was closed as we came out from church. Every one therefore had to pass out by that which opened on to Upper School and the stairs leading down to the colonnade; but as the Doctor himself guarded these last, and would allow none to pass, it became necessary for us all to go on from one enclosure into the other, and as fast as we were released from chapel we were penned up in the Upper School. A little beyond the centre of the room, just in advance of the middle desks, was a semicircle of chairs, placed for the Provost and Fellows, who were to come in afterwards, and behind these congregated all the Fifth Form as best they could. The space between the centre desks was left as an open stage, from which the speakers were to declaim; and between these again and the big doors, the lower portion of the

room was devoted to the Lower boys, who filled the benches on each side, and had to be kept in order by the junior members of the Doctor's division, who stood like policemen at intervals down the centre of the room, and kept a free passage open for the dignitaries who were to come in when all was ready.

These were of course quite private speeches compared to those on the 4th of June, but they served admirably as practice for that occasion. Not more than four or five perhaps spoke on these days; but as they came round three or four times each half, all Sixth Form got a turn at it, and were obliged to face an audience of their schoolfellows, which was very little less formidable than one of strangers, who were always more indulgent hearers. To-day the performances were quickly over, the discriminating occupants of the arm-chairs at once retired, followed and almost trod upon by the crush of boys who rushed down the narrow staircase in their eagerness to escape. Trevor was first in the school-yard, and as soon as I joined him we set off at a sharp pace round the corner of the Slough road, and proceeded in the direction of the Fifteen-arch bridge. There were no books for us to leave at my dame's, so we got off at once, and began to think what amount of distance we were likely to get over between this and two o'clock.

“It's now a quarter to twelve,” he said. “I'll tell you what, if we ran for a bit of the way, when we get out into the country, we might really get as far as Burnham Beeches.”

“It's a tremendous way off.”

“Yes, I know it is. But I should like to get to it if we could. Do you know, I have never been there yet?”

"Nor have I," I answered ; "so I vote we do it."

And we did it accordingly, though not without a struggle. Past Salt Hill, where the deserted mound called up the thoughts of Montem, and where the deserted gardens suggested later recollections of Sunday afternoons which we had spent as smaller boys in shady idleness ; and then on through roads whose long monotony would hardly have been borne but for the sake of what they led to. The ground was hard, and the crisp freshness of the air was pleasant as we walked, yet the distance was more than had been bargained for, and as the time wore on our steady pace became exchanged for the "double," and even then we began to despair of reaching our goal.

"Oh, I say !" I cried, as we came on to a sort of heath. "We shall never be able to get over that."

"Wait a bit till we get up to it, and see what it's like. But I'm afraid we shall have to turn back."

"I'm sure we shall," I said ; and gave up running in disgust.

Trevor went on, and soon stood on the edge of the waste.

"Come on," he cried ; "here we are !"

"Nonsense."

"Yes, we are. Come on—don't lose time."

So again I quickened my pace, and soon caught him up. He was right in what he had said, the Beeches were indeed in sight. What we had entered on was a sort of half-heath, half-common, which stretched away level towards the left, but in front and towards the right it sank down towards a hollow, where a little brook might be supposed to run, and on the other side of this

was the copse of beeches which gave its name to the place.

"We must just go down to them," I said, "though we shan't be able to walk through."

The rough little bit of pasture was soon crossed, and down we went into the valley. It was all dry, and there was nothing but an accumulation of leaves, which rustled as we trod among them. The beeches themselves were indeed some of them magnificent. The branches, however, were rather low, and it was difficult to walk among them ; but some of the trees we could see were enormous fellows—short in the trunk, but in girth looking really like giants ; and as we gazed upon the sort of forest which they formed, we could not help agreeing with all the praises which we had heard, and congratulating ourselves that at length we had accomplished a visit to them.

Five minutes, however, was the limit of our stay. We had taken an hour and a quarter coming, and we had, therefore, only fifty-five minutes left in which to return. It was useless to think of being in time for two o'clock absence ; all that we could hope for was that we should not be late for the second calling, which followed for those who had not answered to their names at first. And in this hope we were not disappointed. A quicker run, if possible, than before brought us in just as the quarter-past two was striking, and much to our relief, the Doctor was still standing on the Chapel steps with a small group around him.

"Why so late?" he asked us, as we came up, for we were nearly the first for the second calling.

"We couldn't get back in time, sir, from Burnham Beeches."

"It's your own fault for going there. I can't take that as an excuse. You must both of you come to me at one to-morrow."

And so we were dismissed.

"Well, that will just cut up our after twelve to-morrow," I said, as we walked away.

"Oh, I don't care for that," said Trevor. "It's as little as he could have given us."

Our adventure, therefore, had no very serious consequences, and neither of us regretted what we were made to pay for our visit. In this way several of the after twelves during the winter were passed. Stoke Pogis, Gray's old church, the Bells of Ouseley, and the neighbouring Runnymede, and besides these the Park, with its almost inexhaustible variety of walks, gave occupation for our days. The end of this half and the beginning of next were both somewhat deficient in the means for amusement, and these long walks were certainly an agreeable way of getting acquainted with the country. It is astonishing how careless boys are as to the neighbourhood which surrounds them. As for myself, it was not till the last year of my life at Eton that I paid a visit to some of the places which ought to have been seen long before, and I am sure that many go away without knowing perhaps even by name what they have lived so near.

CHAPTER IV.

HOME BOUND.

“ Now humbler joys of home-felt quiet please,
Successive study, exercise, and ease.”

Pope.

THE frost set in with the beginning of the year, and when we came back to Eton, in the month of January, there was every prospect of a severe winter. Not very pleasant weather for a change of quarters, was my thought, as I drove up to my dame's, and was received by the soft and greasy-looking butler.

“ Well, how are you, Bill ?” for we none of us ever thought of adopting the lengthened form of William, which Mr. Argles always made use of.

“ Quite well, sir, thank you. You've got Mr. Clinton's room this half, haven't you, sir ?”

“ Yes, and I want my boxes to go up there.”

“ I'll take 'em presently, sir.”

It was no use my waiting in the cold till they were brought up, so I left them where they were, and ran upstairs myself, to look at my new abode, and also to warm myself at the fire. Clinton had left at the end of last half, and as his room had a much better look-out than mine, I had applied to Mrs. Seely in order to be allowed to move into it. There was no objection made, and all my

possessions had been accordingly transferred from one to the other. My old room had been a very comfortable one in itself, but unfortunately the window opened on to the back yard, and all the look-out which I got was against a dead wall opposite, from the other side of which some highly unsavoury smells would at times arise. Clinton's room, on the contrary, looked out on to the open street, so there was the double advantage of having fresh air, and also a view of everything that was going on outside in our own immediate locality. And besides this, there was the fact that ever since I had been at my dame's, and even before it, this room had always been looked upon as belonging peculiarly to the Captain; and it was not unnatural that this idea should have some weight with me, and that on my succeeding to the position of Captain, I should also wish to succeed to my predecessor's room.

One of the first things I did this half was to examine carefully the few articles of furniture which were left to me, and to make up my mind to put my room into a little like decent order. It was quite worth while doing so, I thought, for I should be here till the end of July, and so should have ample time for the enjoyment of it; and besides, it would look so much better in the summer half, when visitors were about, and my credit as Captain of my dame's had to be kept up. The first person I took into counsel was Lovell, who was a fellow of a good deal of taste, so I made him promise to come with me up town, and help in settling matters with the different shopkeepers.

"Where are you going to, first?" he asked, as we started off.

"Why, we had better go to Runicles's, and ask him about my bureau."

"Very well ; what are you going to have done to it ?"

"I want the panels taken out, and something put in their place."

"Don't have plain silk, whatever you do."

"What do you mean ?"

"Why, have something put in front of it like brass wires."

"Oh, of course, that's what I mean to do."

Runicles was at home, and visible in his shop. He was a small, submissive-looking man, and was yet one of those people who, in spite of their looks, might be the biggest cheats on the face of the earth, though candour makes me confess that in all my dealings with him I found him as honest as any tradesman can be expected to be. The poor man was unmercifully bullied by all who came into his shop, and this might help to give him the fatigued and worn-out look and drawl with which he met his persecutors ; and really when, in answer to some rude nickname, he said, "Don't, sir, please don't call me by that hateful name," the tone of mingled exhaustion and sorrow was enough to soften anybody, if they were not still more irresistibly impelled to burst out into a fit of laughing. However, to-day we were alone with him, and as both of us had respect unto his feelings, our business was finished very amicably, and it was all arranged that he should send to fetch my bureau, with a view to carrying out the necessary alterations.

"Well, and where's the next place ?" said Lovell, as we came out.

"I want to go as far as Barton's, the upholsterer"

“What do you want there?”

“I don’t exactly know yet; I want to see what he has got.”

“Oh, look here,” said Lovell, suddenly, “here comes your tutor.”

“Let’s go in here, then,” I said. “Quick.”

It happened to be a bookseller’s, and Mr. Turner, to our surprise, came in also. But he was not in pursuit of us, it was some business of his own he was looking after, and our shirking had been managed so well that he could have no fault to find with us. A nod of recognition was all the notice he took of me, and then, seeing him busily engaged at the counter, we slipped out and continued our walk, knowing well that he could not overtake us, since he was going the other way back to College.

The purchase of an arm-chair, a tablecloth, and a few other things, was gradually accomplished; and I congratulated myself in thinking that my room would really look well and comfortable when these additions were made to its ordinary furniture. I had no wish to rival the extravagancies which were occasionally to be seen in the rooms of those who had more money than sense at their command, but still I had every wish to provide for the ease and for the outward appearances to which a better room and an accession of dignity seemed to entitle me.

The duties which I had succeeded to as Captain of Mr. Argles’s house were anything but onerous. The first of them which had come before me had been on the very morning after we had all come back, and was the distribution of the fags. I was supposed to write out a list, assigning every Lower boy to some master, who

was bound to accept him without question. This was rather a pleasant piece of work than otherwise, for of course I could have my own pick, and take those I liked best for myself first ; after this I could gratify any particular friends by consulting their wishes, and then could distribute the multitude to easy or cruel masters, as my own prejudices favoured them or not. Three fags were what were considered my right ; then Waller and Barker, the next two in the house, had two each, and about six or eight others were content with one apiece. It may easily be imagined that as I messed now by myself, there was very little work to occupy three pair of hands ; but it never would have done to content myself with less than my position entitled me to, and so their attendance was always required morning and evening. The only thing which I allowed was that one should act as butler, not doing anything himself, but seeing that the others fagged properly ; and if anything was wrong, the butler was to be held responsible, which made him look sharp after the other two, and really secured things being done much better than I could have managed it myself without such help.

Another part of my duty was to call absence every Sunday morning at prayers and every evening at lock-up. This was done simply in order to save the master, who happened to be my old acquaintance Mr. Dyce, the trouble of exerting his voice. He himself had always to be present, for every dame's house is supposed to be under the charge of some master, who is intended to keep an eye upon the boys and set such punishments as are necessary, or complain of those who deserve it. Mr. Dyce was thus a sort of presiding genius over our house, and always

called in by Mr. Argles to enforce his orders. He was also always present at absences in order to take notice of any who might be late, but he only stood by my side, and left me to call over the list, though not allowing me afterwards to set the punishments.

It was certainly well that there should be no greater powers attached to the position than these. There was indeed the license to set a punishment within the house for casual disturbances or other offences, but it was a license which was rarely taken advantage of, and during my eight months of office it was never once put in practice. If such a thing had been the regular custom, it would have had the effect of isolating one boy from the rest of the house ; for those who were liable to such correction would have shunned the society of one who thus became more like an officer of justice than one of themselves. The position of head of the house would be exalted, but it would be exalted at the expense of many friendships and much familiar intercourse with the rest of his companions ; and certainly the lower portion of the house would look upon him with the cold feeling of respect which they paid to a young master, even if they did not positively dislike him for being raised above themselves while he was yet one of them.

The early frost had been but a threatening of what was to come later. It had been sufficient, however, to cause a general accumulation of waters as soon as the thaw came. The snows were melted, the frozen reservoirs released, and the Thames felt the contributions which every little ditch and hill-side was sending down to it. The whole river rose perceptibly. Gradually it reached the top of its banks ; then, not content with being level

with the whole surrounding country, it encroached upon the nearest meadows, and finally put large tracts of land entirely under water. Such floods were by no means of uncommon occurrence at Eton. The whole country lay very low, and the passage for the waters below Windsor Bridge was somewhat narrow and confined. The consequence was, that when there was much rain or snow in the upper districts through which the river passed, the stream came down swollen and rapid, and not finding its course as unimpeded as it could have wished, was in a measure dammed up, and so, as the accumulation increased, turned the neighbouring fields into a lake.

I was coming out of school one day, when Waller, who was near me, proposed that we should go and look at these floods, and ascertain where the water was gaining, and what probability there was of its rising any further.

"We can just look about us, you know," he said, "and see the general appearance of things."

"Very well, I've no objection," I answered; "but I must send my books back to my dame's."

A Lower boy was soon caught hold of, and told to go to Norton's room at Argles's, and there deposit the books he was intrusted with. Waller followed my example, and we were thus free to set off at once.

"What do you think the first fellow whom I spoke to told me, when I said my books were to go to my tutor's?" asked Waller.

"I am sure I don't know—what?"

"Why, he said he wasn't a Lower boy at all."

"Well, did you ask him his name? You could do that if you couldn't fag him, and then you could find out."

"No," he said, "I didn't ask his name, but I am sure he wasn't in Fifth Form."

"Why?"

"Because he looked so dirty and disreputable. I am sure it was all a lie."

"But you didn't get him to go for you, I suppose?"

"No, that's the worst of it. If a fellow tells you he's in Fifth Form, you can't disprove it, and so you are done."

"Yes. Luckily half the Lower boys haven't the cheek to do so. They are afraid of being found out, and they know they'd catch it pretty well if they were."

"I should hope so," he said; and so the subject dropped.

The direction which we first took was that of South Meadow, and Keate's Lane was of course the natural way of reaching it. Down we went, accordingly, and soon passed the Mathematical School, and came to where the road opens on to the long piece of meadow land which serves as the football ground for so many different houses. Nothing of the sort was now going on; most of it was already covered by the waters, and the rest was reduced to such a perfect state of swamp that it would have been madness to attempt to walk across it. On the whole, however, it was not quite so bad as we had anticipated, and I remarked as much to Waller as soon as we got a good view of it.

"It's not flooded all over yet, as I expected."

"No," he answered, "but it soon will be."

"Why; do you think the water is rising?"

"Well, it's not falling," he said, "at all events. You see the gravel is quite dry up to its very edge."

“Yes, but it’s so high now, I can’t think it will rise any higher.”

“Oh, it’s nothing, you know, to what it was six or seven years ago.”

“I know there were some tremendous floods then, but that was a peculiar year.”

“Yes, so it was,” he answered, “but still this one may be so also.”

“I forget how far the water came in that year.”

“Well, I didn’t see it myself, I only know what others have told me.”

“And what was that?” I asked.

“Well, all this was covered, and it went up the lane, even as far as the Mathematical School.”

“Did it really? And what did the fellows do about mathematics?”

“Why, you see, it didn’t come very far beyond the round house, and there was a punt just where the water began, which made a sort of communication between the mainland and the passage leading down to the smaller rooms.”

“It would have been rather queer if everybody had had to go to school in a boat,” was my remark.

“Yes; then everybody would have said they were bad oars, as an excuse for coming in late to school.”

“Fancy seeing my tutor too,” I said, “sculling into chambers in his cap and gown.”

“Well, but you know,” continued Waller, “fellows at that time really could not get up town.”

“How did they manage then?”

“Why, planks were laid along, on any sort of supports which they could get to stand above the water.”

"What, just a single narrow strip for people to pass backwards and forwards on?"

"Yes, nothing more."

"And then," I asked, "what happened when two people met, each coming different ways?"

"Oh, then, either one of them had to turn back till they came to a shop, or fight for his right of way."

"The last happened pretty often, I expect?"

"Oh, yes, lots of fellows got shoved into the water that way, and then, after they were wet themselves, they wanted to push every one else in whom they met on the plank. It was quite an excitement, I should think, for the time."

The College itself fortunately stands on a small mound above the surrounding country, and this keeps it free from inundations, like an island in the midst of the waters. Besides the convenience of being thus high and dry, its position also helps to make the place much healthier than it would otherwise be, and it is often free from many of those disorders which at times infest the low-lying villages of the neighbourhood. Scarlet fever is the only thing which remains prevalent at certain seasons, and this also is decreasing very much within late years, so much so, in fact, that it has ceased to be regarded as a periodical visitant; and since the Sanatorium was built for the reception of those who were attacked, there have been but a small number of patients to send to it. In former days, however, the floods, or rather the subsiding of the floods, left frequently behind them the seeds of fever; and the damp months at the opening of the year became objects of especial dread to anxious parents. It is certainly well that a change has been effected, but whether our thanks are due to Nature or the

art of man is doubtful; both probably would claim a share.

"Well, it's no use standing here," I said, as we still kept looking over the watery expanse of South Meadow. "What are we to do now?"

"I don't know. Do you think we could get into the town along the edge here, as far as the new church and that way?"

"It's so infernally swampy," I said, "that though it's not entirely water, one would be wet over the ankles in doing so."

"Perhaps we had better not try it; it's no use walking in wet and heavy boots."

"The whole of South Meadow," I said, "is certainly as bad as if the water was actually covering it."

"Yes," he said, "it's a very fair flood; it's cut one off from most of the country."

"There's nothing left, then, but to go back the way we came."

"I suppose not; we have seen pretty nearly all that we can see."

"And that's not very much," I added.

"I'll tell you what I shall do," he said. "I shall go and have a chop at Tap."

"That's not a bad idea. I'll come with you."

And so we retraced our steps up Keate's Lane, and then in the direction of Barnspool Bridge. As we passed through College, the faces of idlers looked down upon us from "Pop;"* and through the windows of Barnes' and Webber's, the two confectioners on the way, we could see that their shops were well filled by boys who pro-

* The name given to a club and a debating society combined, in imitation of the "Unions" of Oxford and Cambridge.

bably, like ourselves, were driven into spending their money by having nothing else to do. The two latter places were the resort of almost all the Upper boys, and of many even among the Lower ones, who considered Brown's as somewhat beneath their dignity. During my first year at Eton I had always patronized the latter, and been very well content with what I had got there; but as I rose in the school, the influence of example became too strong for me, and I abandoned my old friend to make the acquaintance of these newer and more fashionable ones. To-day, perhaps, they were busier than usual, and from the numbers which had collected there, we began to think that Tap itself might very probably be equally full.

This little place, whose name sufficiently indicates its character, was a sort of tiny public-house or beershop, which existed solely through the custom of Etonians, and had almost become a special institution for their benefit. Outwardly it appeared as respectable as possible, if indeed it could be said to have any appearance at all; and it required some little acuteness to detect the inscription of the license over a door, which only differed from its neighbours in being almost perpetually open. It had, in fact, been a private house, such as any other in the street, and no alteration scarcely had been made in its arrangement. The parlour remained as before. only now it was used as a drinking room, and a screen had shut off one corner where the taps for drawing the beer had been placed. A round table and a few chairs formed the necessary, and perhaps also the original furniture of the place, and the room looked as plain and simple as the best parlour of any moderate lodging-

house. Many had been the threats which the Provost and Fellows had uttered against such a place for dissipation ; and they would have bought it up over and over again had they had the power, but somehow no one would sell, and the lease never fell in ; so they had to live on in hopes. But really it is a very great question whether such a place was necessarily an evil or not. Spirits were never sold, and no boy that I ever heard of ever got drunk on beer. And since probably some such place or tavern would spring into existence the moment the old one was done away with, it really seemed almost better to keep what was respectable of its kind, rather than to run the risk of some low pothouse starting up. It is true that Tap was a public place, and that anybody could go into it, but practically they did not do so ; and since none but Etonians were ever there, the masters could hardly complain of their falling into bad company. The set of rules, too, which were pasted up with a view to the maintenance of order, were such as would have done no discredit to any house ; and therefore on the whole, though it may have been in some slight measure an evil, the good points about it were quite sufficient to plead for its quiet existence.

No master was in sight as Waller and I got to the door, so we entered boldly and walked into the little room. It was tolerably full, as we had expected, and a lively conversation was going on over the different pots of beer which stood about the table. We ordered our chops, and then became at leisure to watch or take part as we thought fit in what was going on.

“ Hallo !” cried some fellow, “ who has put this bread in my beer ?”

"It was Thomas!" shouted some one from the other end of the room.

"Oh, was it? then here goes;" and the sop flew across the room to hit Thomas on the head.

"Fine for throwing bread in Tap!" he cried out. "Here, bring a pot of beer for Mr. Willis." And presently the beer came in, and was set down in his account, that being the way in which fines were levied for the good of the house.

Throwing missiles of all sorts, personal abuse, and general bad language, were all punished in this way, so that it cannot be said that order was neglected. The Captain of the boats was supposed to enforce all this, as being the chief of the visitors who came there; and if any one had felt disposed to be refractory, an interview with so important an authority would have soon quieted him down. For my own part, I always wondered at the order which was maintained; and since boys must always have beer, it seems rather hard that such conduct as they have hitherto shown in regulating their supplies should be made the occasion, as it sometimes is, for the severest punishments.

CHAPTER V.

A FROST.

“ On Linden when the sun was low
 All bloodless lay the untrodden snow,
 And dark as winter was the flow
 Of Iser rolling rapidly.”

Campbell.

BEFORE the floods had entirely subsided, the frost which had threatened us earlier in the year came on with increased severity. Many were the speculations as to its probable duration, whether we should get any skating or not, and if so, whether the river itself would be frozen, or only the outstanding water in the meadows. All these possibilities were pretty well discussed by us during the first two or three days of hard weather. The general opinion was certainly in favour of a long spell of it; the state of the atmosphere seemed to have settled down into a quiet stillness, and there was a uniform look about the whole heavens which encouraged such people as were anxious for no change in the weather.

The first intelligence as to actual ice which we received was the news that some of the water which was over the fields near the railway bridge was in a condition to bear. The fact seemed doubtful, and I determined to go off and ascertain for myself. On arriving it appeared that it

was quite true that there really was ice, but it seemed to be of such a bad quality, and so covered by a rabble both of Eton boys and of beggars, that the thought of skating on it was out of the question. From its being the first piece that had frozen, it may be supposed that it was the shallowest. The field, indeed, in which it lay was by no means so low as the others nearer the river, and the numerous little hillocks with which its surface was studded could now be seen rising at intervals out of the ice, and causing diversities of level which were anything but favourable to a smooth and rapid motion. Nor would the mixed crowd of sliders and blackguards of every sort help to improve it; so I came away at once disgusted, and did not fail to make a most unfavourable report to any whom I saw going in the same direction, as well as to all the inhabitants of my dame's.

But we had not very long to wait before the intensity of the cold froze other and better pieces. Much of the superabundant water shrank away, but the frost kept on so steadily that other places which we had never expected began to bear. In the Playing Fields there was Fellow's Pond, and on the other side of the country even Cuckoo Weir began to be available. Everybody now brushed up their skates, and the wall began to be crowded with itinerant vendors, who offered to fit any foot at a price varying from four to fourteen shillings. Among the small boys they probably drove a roaring trade; but most of those of my own acquaintance were already provided like myself, for it could hardly be expected that a boy would be at Eton three or four years without having the opportunity of practising himself upon the edge of the steel.

"We'll go to Fellow's Pond to-day," said Pryor, as he sat in my room one morning after breakfast. "You'll come, won't you?"

"No," I answered, "I can't come to-day, for I have promised to go to some quiet place with Crossley, who wants to learn how to skate."

"Oh, never mind that; cut him, and come to Fellow's Pond."

"No, I'll come some other day. I won't come to-day."

"Very well, then. I'm going there."

And so immediately after twelve Pryor and others set off for the Playing Fields, and Crossley and myself began to think in what direction we should wend our steps, in order to avoid observation as much as possible.

There happened to be a little pond not very far from the river bank, between Lower Hope and Bargeman's. A pit of some sort had probably been dug there originally, and the water from the river had filtered through, and so turned it into a pond. Its size was quite small, and after very short consideration we came to the conclusion that in all likelihood no one would be skating on it at all, and so it would form the very best of all places for a beginner to exercise himself upon, since there would be no one to ridicule the many falls which always accompany a first lesson.

"Come along, then," I said, "we'll set off at once. Have you got your skates?"

"Yes, here they are," he said, and showed them swinging in his hand.

"Very good, then; we'll go under the viaduct, and just have a look at Cuckoo Weir as we pass."

"All right, we must go this way, then," he said, as he led in the direction of South Meadow.

"There are sure to be lots of fellows there," I remarked as we went along.

"What, on that tiny little pond?"

"No, no, I didn't mean that," I said, "so don't be uneasy. But I meant on Cuckoo Weir; there'll be lots of people there."

"Oh, yes, I dare say; but yet the stream is not very broad."

"No, but it's long, you know, which makes up for it."

"Yes. I see some heads now," he continued, as we gradually advanced towards the place.

"You don't see much, you know, because the banks are high. But now," I added after a pause, "now I see fellows going along on the ice, more towards the left, there."

"Yes, I see them, too," he answered. "That's where the bank is lower."

"Oh, look, there's Barker going along, slowly and steadily, as if he wasn't quite sure of himself."

"Yes, I see," he added, as we neared the bank; "and there's Pryor minor grinning and looking half mad as usual."

"Oh, I'll tell you what; I must go on here for a moment," I said. "Look, here's a hockey party coming down."

"All right, but what shall I do?" asked my helpless friend.

"Why, you put on your skates, too, and try what you can do near the bank, just where it shelves down so gradually."

"I shall get upset in a minute," he said, "in this crowd."

"Oh no you won't, you'll upset yourself before that. Never mind, try what you can do. I'll be back in a minute."

Very reluctantly he put on his skates, and having helped him down as far as the ice, I there left him. But scarcely had I let go of his arm when, like all other beginners, he subsided on the ice stern foremost. It was no use going back again to pick him up, for he was sure to be down again in a second, and the work of assistance would become endless were I always to be helping him. My attention, therefore, was soon withdrawn, and every energy directed to the pursuit of the ball, which was driven by the hockey sticks with the most wonderful rapidity along the ice. Fortunately the players could also get along at a good pace, and so the whole scene became one the most lively and active that could be conceived. It was not a regularly organized game, as I soon found out: there were no chosen sides, and no goal towards which the ball was to be driven, but the great object of most of the players was nevertheless attained without that. They had something towards which they might direct their energies, and the pursuit of the ball in whichever direction it flew gave a motive to their actions. I was soon as busily engaged as any of the rest in the fun; the stick which I carried with me had a good crook, and so I could pick at the ball in the midst of a crowd, or strike a blow down the ice with equal success. All the shallow part of the stream from the river down to Italy was frozen; beyond this, where the water got deeper, towards Acropolis, it was hardly safe to venture. But even as it was we had a good long course down the stream, and though the windings and the

corners impeded the ball, still they were also of advantage to us, in preventing its flying any considerable distance out of our reach.

Pryor minor was playing amongst the rest. He was a nice fellow, rather like his major in countenance and height, and like him also in his untidiness of dress and general carelessness of manner. Considerably lower down in the school than myself, we had yet come to know something of each other through the medium of his brother, and I was not sorry to have at all events some fellow here whom I could speak to. Barker was somewhere about, but scarcely trusted himself to spin along in the midst of a multitude, so Pryor was virtually the only one I knew.

"I thought you had got hold of Crossley," he said, as we came together.

"So I have. We are going to a quiet place where he may try his skates."

"And so you bring him here first," he said, laughing.

"Oh, we're going off presently. He is only waiting for a minute or so."

"I've seen him get at least sixty tumbles," he said. "But perhaps it would be better to say that I had never seen him on his legs."

"Well, the first time I tried to skate, I was on my back pretty nearly the whole morning. But," I added, "I'll go and look after him now, as you seem to think he wants it."

Leaving the hockey, I went towards the place where I left my companion, expecting to find him using all his endeavours towards maintaining a perpendicular position. Instead of that he was seen quietly reclining on the

grass, gazing with the sober eye of contemplation upon the scene which was before him.

“ Hallo, Crossley, you’ll never learn to skate at this rate,” I shouted.

“ Well, you know,” he answered, apologetically, “ I did try it for some time, but found it such hard work, and everybody laughed so, that I determined to wait till I got to a quieter place.”

“ That means to say, till I came back, and we could go on to our little pond.”

“ Well, something of the sort.”

Our skates were soon off, and a few minutes’ walk brought us to Bargeman’s, after which we were in the meadow where our practice ground lay. It was the square field, bounded on two sides by the river, at the other end of which lay Upper Hope, and across which so many people made a cut in order to save the corner when running with a race. But all we thought of now was our little piece of water, and our eyes were instantly turned to it as soon as we passed the shed. We had hoped and expected to find it quite deserted, but were surprised to see signs of animation, which told not only of the presence of men, but of women also. The banks rose high, as the sides of an old pit might naturally be supposed to do, and therefore it was impossible to see the surface of the ice, and all that was going on upon it. But we could at all events make out that three or four hats and feathers were moving round, and that not unfrequently the black hat of some one, whom we instantly set down as a master, appeared in close proximity to one or other of them.

“ What’s to be done now?” said Crossley.

“What’s to be done? Why, go on of course, and see who these people are.”

“I don’t think I shall skate here,” he said.

“I don’t think you will, either,” was my answer; “but you may, at all events, try to do so. You’ll never get a piece of water entirely to yourself.”

“Well, I shall see. I’ll tell you who the man in the beaver is.”

“Who?”

“Why, it’s Dyce; and the ladies in the pork-pie hats are the Miss Argleses.”

“Oh, well,” I said, “there’s nothing very terrible in facing them.”

“Well, it’s better than if they were strangers; but Dyce is such a sarcastic little beast.”

“Oh, nonsense. One laughs, of course, when a fellow tumbles down, but you’ll get on very well.”

We raised our hats as we approached, and made a sort of comprehensive bow to the ladies and Mr. Dyce. The former received our salutations with smiles, and as we were tolerably intimate with them, inquired whether we had come of malice aforethought to witness their performances. The strongest denial would hardly convince them, but when at last I said it was more with a view to solitude that Crossley had come here, since it was his first day on the ice, they instantly began to congratulate themselves on our coming, since there would be, at all events, one of us who was worse than they were, and the ridicule would be turned on him if it fell on anybody at all.

“You had better come to this side, Crossley, where the bank is low,” said Mr. Dyce, as he saw us putting on our skates.

"Round here," he added, as we followed his directions. "Now then, give me your hand, and let us see if we can't steady you on your legs a bit."

He stood up, but swayed ominously from side to side, and his feet really looked as if they were inclined to run away from under him. Still he was determined not to confess his weakness.

"I think I shall do now, thank you, sir, with my stick."

"Ah, but my good friend, that's just what you ought not to use. Depend upon it, the best thing is to learn to skate without any help."

"But I should get on very poorly without it."

"Never mind that. If you do get some extra tumbles, you'll get to be much more independent in time than if you were always leaning upon something."

So he went on staggering and falling without any assistance. Mr. Dyce having fairly started him, we both went circling about independently with the ladies, who, greatly to their credit, did not laugh very much at the adventures of a beginner. The whole area was so exceedingly small that we could never get him out of sight, but his troubles were so numerous, that any little charm which the novelty might have possessed was soon lost. Occasionally Mr. Dyce would say good-naturedly, "Our friend has succumbed again," and then go off to see what assistance he could render to the prostrate hero; and sometimes he took my arm, and so attempted to get on a little better. But as a rule we left him pretty much to himself, knowing that the less observation that was paid to him the more likely he was to persevere in his practice; and that since his failures would not

be made a matter of criticism, he would become more indifferent to them, and more steadfast in the difficult pursuit of rectitude.

Our time, however, drew to an end. It was half-past one, and College was a long way off ; so with reluctance, on the part of one of us at all events, we made up our minds that it was time to be going home.

" You will not stay much longer, either, I suppose," was my remark to Miss Argles as I was leaving the ice.

" Oh, no, we shall come away directly," she answered.

" I think we had better go at once," put in her sister. " Mr. Dyce," she cried, without waiting any further, " we are going."

" Indeed," he said, " I am sorry to hear that ; but I shall be going myself in a minute."

They came off the ice on to the grass, like ourselves, and sitting down, proceeded to release their feet from the confinement caused by the straps of the skates. Mr. Dyce was left on the pond by himself, and seemed rather to enjoy his solitary tenancy. He was really a capital skater, and now that his course was unobstructed, began cutting figures, such as three and eight and spread-eagles, in a way that astonished us all, and made us envy his powers.

" Oh," said Miss Argles, jumping up suddenly at the sound of a crack, " is Mr. Dyce in ?"

" No, he isn't," responded that individual, " and has no intention of getting a ducking this morning."

" But the ice is cracking, and the sun strikes very hot. Are you sure you had better not come off ?"

" I will in a minute," he answered, " but it's as firm as possible. Look here." And by way of testing its

strength, and at the same time showing the excellence of his own skating powers, he jumped up into the air, and came down heavily but evenly on the two blades beneath his feet. Few people could have kept their feet after such a display, but he seemed as steady as though he had jumped on the ground instead of on such a slippery surface, and with a view to gratifying the love of display, he proceeded to repeat the test. This time, however, the result was different ; and we could none of us help laughing when we saw him come down fairly and evenly, but so heavily as to go straight through the ice, and to remain with only the upper portion of his body visible to us. Every one laughed, and he himself with the rest. The shallowness of the water had prevented him going any further, and so it was not a difficult matter to hoist himself out on to the bank ; but he had had enough of skating for that day, and cold wet trousers helped very materially to accelerate the return of the party home.

“ Well, you’d much better have come with us to Fellow’s Pond,” said Pryor, as we stood outside my dame’s door before two o’clock absence.

“ I suppose it was awfully crowded.”

“ Oh, yes, everybody was there ; rather too many, in fact.”

“ And was the ice good ?” I asked.

“ As smooth and good as possible.”

“ Well, I shall go there to-morrow,” I said. “ I dare say it won’t be much cut up.”

“ There were some fellows skating beautifully to-day,” he said, after a pause.

“ Who were they ?”

“ Well,” he said, “ Horsly was one, and Young was

another ; they were cutting figures all over the place. A quadrille was got up at one time."

"And did you dance?"

"Not I, but I saw the others."

"Well, I shall go to-morrow," I repeated.

"Yes," he said, "if the frost lasts." And at this moment Mr. Dyce came down the street, having changed his trousers, and put a stop to our conversation.

Fellow's Pond was a piece of water which derived its name from having been originally made for the sake of the Fellows during Catholic times, when fish preserves were necessary to enable them to supply themselves on the days of fasting. The real pond was an excrescence, which had been formed alongside of the main stream, but only connected with it by a narrow mouth at one end. Thus there were two parallel pieces of water, but it was only the true pond, where there was no current, which had as yet been frozen.

My visit came off satisfactorily the next day, and many succeeding days also did I pass there. The frost steadily continued, and at length the river itself received a thin coating. It would require some time, however, before this would bear, and very few people ventured to hope that it would ever do so. It seemed so improbable that what had not happened before for an immense time should now come to pass, and that this present winter should be so much colder than the preceding ones. Come to pass, however, it did, and nearly the whole stream from Lower Hope to Railway Bridge, and again from the Brocas Chump to the Cobbler and Lock Cut, was pronounced safe, and fit to bear any amount of skaters.

Such a thing had never happened before in the memory of any of the boys, and only once or twice in that of the masters. Every one therefore was eager to set foot upon the river, if it was only that he might be able to boast hereafter that he had crossed the Thames dryshod. But over such an extent of surface even four or five hundred boys, in addition to the townspeople, could hardly be said to produce much effect. There was never a crowd anywhere, and the only place which became at all thronged was the narrow channel going down to the Locks, the Lock Cut, where the stillness of the water had rendered the ice better.

The excitement caused by such an unusual event lasted, strange to say, as long as the event itself. There was no time indeed for it to flag, for the cause of it passed away far quicker than it had come ; and two days was the limit during which Nature allowed us to admire her frozen waters. The thaw came on immediately after a heavy fall of snow, but as this last was itself a cause of some amusement, it shall not be entirely passed over in silence.

It was about two o'clock one day when the snow began, and it came down so thickly and so steadily that an hour later, when we went into school, the ground had already a very fair covering. Everybody as they congregated under the school gate seemed to take an unusual interest in the weather ; hopes were eagerly expressed that it might lie thick after four ; and each boy congratulated his neighbour on the feathery shower which floated round them. To a stranger the joy thus occasioned by a heavy snow-storm might seem somewhat extraordinary, for it is not usually considered a pleasant thing itself, nor is

it much wished that it should lie deep in the streets. But every Eton boy knew what it was the signal for. It was the first real fall which had occurred this year, and so it was about to give them the first opportunity of showing that skill in snowballing which the rivalry between Collegers and Oppidans suggests, and which the drifts in the streets give the means of carrying into effect.

"This looks well, doesn't it?" said Waller, as we hurried down stairs when school was over. "The snow is about an inch and a half deep."

"Yes," I said, "let's go into Weston's yard at once."

Round by the Wall was the best way, since by the other we should have been trespassing too closely on our enemy's quarters. Our books were at once sent home, and then we joined the crowd which was already assembling in the open space between College and the Head Master's house.

"Why, we are all Oppidans together," I said, for none of the enemy appeared in sight.

"Oh, we'll soon get them out, 'even if they don't come of their own accord."

"That's the way," said a fellow close by me, as a snowball sounded against one of the windows over our heads.

"Let's all shy at their windows, that'll bring them out."

The call was quickly answered, and a mob of gowns tumbled down the stairs, and took up their position in front of the library door. All College almost were there, from the smallest Lower boy to the Captain of the school. Every one seemed to think that a fight of this

sort was an "institution," and that it was no disgrace for the biggest and best to be mixed up in it.

"Now then, for it," cried Pryor, who was in the front rank with us, and he hurled the first shot, which told heavily on the hat of some unfortunate Colleger.

There was no time for talking, every one rushed to follow his example. As a periodical, and at the same time parodiacial, poet has said, "then darkened all the face of heaven with showers of white artillery;" and certainly the interchange of fire became most rapid. What had begun in very tolerable good humour, soon excited itself into the warmth of passion ; and one could see by the vicious way in which the snow was collected and discharged, that there was a desire not only to conquer but to punish.

"Those brutes have got their gowns on, which is a tremendous protection," said Waller.

"It's rather in their way, too, when they want to shy," suggested a neighbour.

"Hallo, look out, Norton."

But it was too late ; a snowball, hardened almost into ice, had struck me on the side of the head, and made a slight cut.

"I say, they're putting stones in their snowballs," shouted some one, as soon as he saw a drop of blood.

The words spread at once, and raised a storm of indignation amongst all our party. Every one armed himself in each hand, and then by a sort of simultaneous movement advanced upon the position of the opponents. We had begun by keeping at a tolerable distance from each other, but now this was reduced to almost one half of what it had been ; and the effect of such proximity on

the hats and persons of the belligerents became very apparent.

"They don't like it at all," said my friend, who had warned me before.

"I don't know what they can do," I said ; "they can't go any further back than those railings."



"They'll make a bolt for it presently, you'll see."

"Well, let's push them close now, pay them out well."

"All right ! my hat is smashed already, and that's the only thing I cared about."

We did our best to dislodge them, and they really were so galled by our fire that it was no wonder that we

succeeded. But instead of flying to their own castle, to the refuges of College, they merely moved off to another battle ground, and thus showed an amount of spirit which we were unprepared for, but which we could appreciate even in an enemy. In the Playing Fields they knew that there would never be any danger of being pushed into a corner, or confined as they were at present ; its open area would give them space to advance or to retreat at pleasure ; so with one rush they made off in a body, and the fight had to be renewed on the grass where there was not so much chance of a stone finding its way into the midst of the snow.

What prodigies of valour would here have been performed, what wounds received, and what insults avenged, is matter for the imagination rather than for history. For scarcely had we recommenced the contest when the form of the Doctor was seen approaching the field of action. No victory could have been more complete than that which he gained, for in a moment both armies fled before him. Glory was abandoned in the pursuit of safety ; and all preferred to trust to chance for the renewal of the fight on some future day, rather than to stay and continue it, with the certainty of being punished for so doing as disturbers of the public peace.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOATING SEASON BEGINS.

“Your ships are manned, your mariners are people
Engrossed by swift impress.”

Antony and Cleopatra.

WHEN the snow and ice had gone, the next thing which occupied the public mind was the making up of the boats, in anticipation of the summer season which was to come. This was a thing in which, as a Lower boy, I had never taken much interest, for the very good reason that I could never be affected personally by it, since only Fifth Form were allowed to belong to them. But now many of my friends were concerned in it, and I myself, though as yet not actually an aquatic, could feel a sympathy for those who indulged in river pursuits. Indeed it had always been an object of ambition with me to get into the boats, but hitherto circumstances had prevented my ever becoming a candidate; and it was only within this last year which I was to spend at Eton that I became at liberty to seek the honour.

There is a certain rule laid down, and, as I think, very wisely, which regulates the admission of Sixth Form into the boating list. They are always supposed to be of some dignity, if not from their persons or characters, at

all events from their position. It might seem therefore beneath their rank to be placed on the ordinary list of aspirants, and provision was accordingly made to preserve them from the vulgar herd, and at the same time to guarantee them a place consistent with their dignity. For this purpose the Ten-Oar was made use of, and became a refuge for all people of a certain rank, but who might not have the highest capacity for rowing. It stood first on the list, and took precedence of all the other boats, but yet was by no means the best manned. A dignified retirement was what it professed to give, not an opportunity for the display of active exertions ; and accordingly, though it was never looked down upon as contemptible, yet it could never either be looked up to as affording a pattern for the other crews. A place in it, however, was a good thing secured, and as it was now in my power to obtain one, I preferred the certainty of such a position to the hazardous experiment of trying how far my own performances would carry me, more especially as it was not quite certain whether any recruit ought to be placed in his first year above the Britannia.

It is true that I was not actually Sixth Form at present, but I was the very next out of it ; and since it was generally known that I must be made so next half, they gave me the benefit of the offer which my anticipated rank entitled me to. Gladly, too, did I accept it, and then, feeling that my own position was secured, rejoiced in the thought that I was really at length an aquatic, and prepared to take a renewed interest in all that had to do with the water.

“What's to be done to-day?” I said to Darrell, as we met on coming out of school one morning.

"I am sure I don't know," he said. "What have you to propose?"

"Why, nothing particular. Suppose we go up town and look into Sanders's."

"What, and see the list of names for the boats?"

"Yes," I said. "I want to see who is down for them."

"Very well. Come along."

"How jolly it is," he said, as we walked on, "thinking that the first of March will be here so soon."

"Yes, isn't it? It seems really as if the summer was beginning."

"Well, it is the beginning of the summer amusements. I shall be awfully glad to get an oar into my hand again."

"You'll be in the Victory, I should think, this year," I remarked.

"Oh, no, I don't think so," he answered. "The Prince of Wales is more likely. It's only the great swells who get into the Victory."

"Well, I shall be above you, anyhow," I said, laughing.

"What do you mean? Have they asked you to take an oar in the Ten?"

"Yes, and I said I would. I shall be in good company, at all events."

"Swell drybobs, superannuated oars, and other Sixth Form; that's about it."

"And the captain of the boats with us."

"Yes," he said, "he gives some glory to it. But I'd rather be in the Prince of Wales."

"I dare say; but then, you see, I mightn't get in as it's

my first year, and I shouldn't care to be in Lower boats."

"You'd have to associate then with all the bottom of Fifth Form."

"Yes, that's just it, and I prefer good company, so the Ten will suit me very well."

"At all events," he said, "you have got no anxieties as to what place you are to have. That's all settled now, whereas I am waiting and waiting, not knowing where I shall be."

"Well, it won't last long. Drummond told me the ten was all but made up, and the Victory will soon follow."

"Here we are," he said, as we reached the door. "What a crowd of fellows there are."

Sanders's was certainly the chief shop in all Eton. The proprietor was what might be described in trade announcements as a hosier, hatter, and glove-maker; and though he had rivals in his own branch of business, still he managed, at all events in outward appearance, to keep ahead of all competitors. The shop itself had a long front to the street, in the centre of which was a door which admitted visitors into the interior, where their eyes were gladdened by the sight of a counter, presided over by a most suave and obliging lady, popularly known under the name of Miss New. Under her auspices neckties and local gossip were freely dispensed; and it was no uncommon thing for boys to look in on their way up town in order to ascertain the latest pieces of information. Here also were always to be seen the entries for any race that was coming off, as well as the prizes for them; and at this present season, as there

was a tremendous list opened for candidates for the boats, almost the whole school became casual loungers near the counter where it was exhibited.

"There are an immense number of names down, I can see that," said Darrell, as he leant over the shoulders of those who crowded round it.

"Push in," I said. "Let's get near it if we can."

Gradually we worked our way forward as those in front of us retreated after they had satisfied their curiosity, and at last got so near that our own leisurely examination of it became in its turn a subject for impatient remarks.

"There's Moore," I said, "who's at my dame's. He's only just got into Fifth Form."

"Oh, there are lots of those fellows," answered Darrell; "because if a fellow wants to go into the boats he generally does it his first opportunity. I see quite a little fellow at my tutor's whom I didn't know was going in."

"Who's that?"

"Rowley. He's about two bottles high, as somebody said the other day."

"And there's that madman Kennedy. Don't you know that big fellow who is always making a disturbance about the Wall?"

"I know him. I hope he won't get in."

These were the sort of observations drawn forth as we came across any name that we knew among those on the list. Almost all were now down upon it that intended to try for a place, for it neared the time when the crews would have to be made up. The way in which this was managed was as follows: The captain of the boats

appointed other captains for the eights, reserving to himself the Monarch, commonly called the Ten. He then chose his own crew, and after that each of the other captains chose likewise in their turn, so all had a little bit of patronage in their hands ; for though they took the seven best oars that each could find, either among the old members or from the new candidates, still, with such a multitude, where so many were equal, private likings might easily be gratified, and the place of a boy materially affected by the acquaintance which he possessed with these powers. Besides this, the choice of a steerer enabled the captain to show favour to any of his smaller friends ; and so on the whole the position was looked upon as both honourable and agreeable.

The Victory, as I had prophesied, was very soon made up, and Darrell was one of the crew. He announced the fact to me by rushing into my room one day in a state of the greatest excitement, and crying out, "It's all right ! all right ! he's asked me."

"What do you mean ?" I said. "Who's asked what ?"

"Why Oswald has asked me to take an oar."

"Oh, I see. I'm so glad. Then you are in the Victory all right."

"To be sure I am," he said. "I didn't expect it though."

"Well, it's all settled now. Who else have you got in it ?"

"I don't exactly know, but I expect it will be all written out at Sanders's to-morrow morning. Smith steers us."

"That's his right, I suppose. Oswald couldn't help asking him, as he was the senior steerer."

"No, I suppose not. He'll steer the eight, you know, so he ought to get the Victory."

"He ought rather to get the Ten."

"Yes, that's true, but then Vernon is the senior of all, and it is only because he is so heavy that Smith will steer the eight."

"So any how the first two places belong to those two."

"Yes, neither of them could be lower than second. But I'm going off to Sanders's, to hear about the other boats."

"Now that your own place is secured?" I said, laughing.

The first of March gradually drew near; the boats' crews were made up, and at length even the Defiance had got eight oars together and a steerer. This last could hardly be said to belong regularly to the boats at all; it was really a sort of supernumerary, which was put on for a time in order to serve the purposes of a training ship, and then the best oars would be drafted from it after Easter to supply any vacancies which might have occurred in the other crews. Such was the Defiance, which of course got the refuse, since its captain had the last choice of all; and when this was made up the list of regularly enrolled aquatics might be said to be closed.

St. David's day became a sort of double festival at Eton, in the same way that St. Andrew's was. Like St. Andrew's, it was the celebration of a patron saint for those of his own nationality, while at the same time it had also a general claim upon the attention of the whole school. There was no match such as Collegers and

Oppidans, but there was something which had almost as great attractions ; it was the opening of the river season, the first day of the year on which all the boats went up in procession to Surly, as though to declare the inauguration of the Thames for another summer of active amusements. Every one took an interest in these proceedings. There were the crews themselves, who of course were the most eager ; then there were the friends of these crews, and these must have composed pretty nearly the whole school. But supposing there were others, then these indifferent extras would at all events be present, if it were only to criticise the rowing, or to observe any accidents which might take place ; so that it might really and truly be said that it was a day of universal interest.

When the morning came therefore it may be imagined that I felt more than usually excited and apprehensive as to the success of the day. I was naturally a very fair oar, but to-day I was nervous and doubtful as to what my performances would be. It was like a first appearance in public ; and though I was glad of the honour of forming part of the procession, still I was almost afraid that I might not support it with that dignity which I should myself have wished.

“It will be frightfully cold,” said Trevor to me, as he came into my room preparatory to our going down to the river.

“I expect it will,” I answered, “but nothing to last year. Do you recollect that ?”

“I should think so. A cold wind driving the snow into our faces ; we were wet from the first minute.”

“One can’t say much against to-day, except that it is dull and cloudy.”

"Well, come along," he said, "we mustn't be late."

There were two or three other fellows going from my dame's, among whom was Moore, who had got into the Defiance, and was as proud in consequence as any ex-Lower boy could be. All were setting out about the same time, and so we joined together and made one party up to the Brocas.

"You'll have to get off first, Norton," said some one, as we reached the raft; "you'd better look sharp and change."

"Oh, there's lots of time," I answered. Nevertheless, finding that it really was getting late, I hurried up-stairs and made all necessary arrangements, just in time to hear, as I came down, the voice of our irate captain asking, in somewhat impatient language, whether we ever intended to appear or not.

"We ought to have been off five minutes ago," said Drummond, who of course gave all the orders on such a day as this.

"The Victory crew are in their boat now, sir," said one of the people of the raft.

"Well, let us get in then as fast as we can," said Drummond. "Now then, bow, there you go; and where's two?"

"Here I am," I shouted, for two was my appointed place where I was to row.

"All right; get your stretcher the proper length. Is yours right, Lake?" he continued, addressing a fellow in front of me.

"You'd better get in yourself now," said Vernon, after everybody had settled themselves.

"Very good. Now then, are you all ready? Push

her out, bow side. Gently. That's it," and gradually we got clear of the raft. "Now then, forward all ; and all together mind." The oars dipped in the water, and with a slow and steady sweep we rowed on in the direction of the railway bridge.

It was of course necessary to wait until all the other boats had got out into the stream, in order that we might start at equal distances from each other, and so go solemnly and processionally up to Locks. There was not much delay however. Many of the others had been ready as soon as we had, and had only been waiting for our departure ; so the signal was soon given, and the whole line set off. Our admirers formed really a very large crowd, and ran or walked along the bank. Sometimes they gave shouts of encouragement ; sometimes particular little bits of advice to individual oars, which seemed by no means to be appreciated by those thus selected. The fact was that criticisms on new oars or bad old ones were very freely given vent to ; and the shout of, "Well rowed, so and so," was more often intended and understood ironically than as a really well-meant bit of praise.

Steadily did the Monarch pursue her way. There was no great casualty to mar our success as the leading boat. All that could be laid to our charge was slight inaccuracies of time. Grosser faults were fortunately unknown. But it was not so with the rest. Specimens of the common crab grew wonderfully plentiful towards the extremity of the line ; and erratic courses were frequently attempted by the bold inexperience of the younger steerers. One of them, indeed, as we passed Rushes, sent the nose of his boat well into the bank ; but

whether it was from a wish to land, or merely in consequence of defective vision, was never precisely ascertained. All these little incidents caused delay, and once or twice we had all to stop in order to allow the unfortunates to regain their distance; but at last Locks were reached, and all of us, even the Defiance, after much difficulty found room within the gates.

Another mile and Surly was reached, where for a time we were freed from our accompanying crowds, since they had to remain on their own side of the water, while we went to the inn opposite. Not very many, however, had come with us thus far; most indeed had been content with running as far as Locks, and some had even deserted us as early as Athens. Still we were glad not to be surrounded by the lookers-on who had come up, and were thankful that we were able to enjoy our beer in peace.

"I don't know what Eton would do without Surly," said Trevor, after we had established ourselves on a seat.

"No, nor Surly without Eton," I said.

"Yes, the two are necessary to each other," he said, laughing.

"Why the fact is, it's such a convenient distance upstream," said Darrell. "It just occupies an after twelve or four coming here, and gives you an object when you go out in a boat."

"It's really not a bad little inn," I said, "and this little bit of grass sloping down to the river is charming."

"Oh yes, no one could ever do away with it. Even the masters wouldn't wish it abolished."

"I suppose not."

"Of course they wouldn't. They think it gives the boys exercise, and keeps us from smoking and drinking in dead water."

"I wonder how long it has been here," I said.

"I wonder too," said Trevor. "The name seems anything but a new invention."

"Oh, it's as old as possible," put in Darrell. "It has been one of the old river-side inns for an immense time."

It really looks as if it had been. The house does not stand facing the river, but obliquely; the double gables make it look picturesque, and the trees near it speak for their own antiquity, if not for what they overshadow. Altogether the general air gives it the appearance of being a respectable age, and it certainly would not surprise me to hear that—

"As ancient is this hostelry
As any in the land may be."

We never patronized the inside of it scarcely, except when a chance thunderstorm drove us there for shelter. What we all preferred was the open grass with a view of the bright river, and even the parallel tables, ranged in the usual sort of tavern bower, had no charms for us. To-day we were all scattered on the little bit of lawn, and filled it up very completely, but everybody was in good spirits, and none of us thought there was one too many. The time of year however was chilly, and though we were glad enough to pay a first visit to Surly, we were not anxious to prolong it, and no one seemed particularly grieved when Drummond gave the word for our departure.

The same order was observed in going down as there had been in coming up. Many of the same delays took place from many of the same causes ; still at last we reached the Brocas in safety, and the different rafts received us into their different changing rooms. The ceremony of the first of March was over, and as we walked down town we felt that the boating season had really commenced, which it could hardly be said to have done earlier in the morning.

“What did you think of the whole performance ?” I asked Darrell, as we stood waiting outside church that afternoon.

“Oh, it wasn’t bad,” he answered, “on the whole. You can’t expect fellows to go well the first time.”

“How did the Ten go ?”

“Well,” he said, “I couldn’t see that, you know, because it was in front of me, and my back was turned to it.”

“Of course it was, I forgot that. But you saw the others.”

“Oh, yes. I took sly glimpses away from my own boat.”

“And what did you think ?”

“Why,” he said, “one can’t say anything the first morning ; some fellows rowed ill, some well. Drummond struck me most.”

“How could that be, if your back was to him ?”

“I didn’t mean in rowing, particularly,” he answered. “But he seemed to me as if he would make a very good captain of the boats. He gave his orders very well and clearly.”

“Yes, and he’s a fine-looking fellow, too,” I said ; “he

looks as if he could row—that broad *chest* and good figure.”

“He certainly promises well”

Little was done during the rest of this half on the river, in spite of its having been formally declared open; and the *Ten* did least of all. The other boats used to go out practising and row up the river, but the *Ten* hardly troubled its head about such things, and a sort of careless idleness found its way into all the crew.

To say the truth, there was but very little time in which anything could have been done. Easter fell early, and the consequence was that the holidays began about the middle of the month, so that there was but a fortnight, and even that was cut up by the Newcastle examination, which took away from us some of our crew.

“The Newcastle,” as we called it, was a scholarship founded by the Duke of Newcastle, which was of the annual value of 50*l.*, and could be held for three years. Its importance, however, was not due to its money value, but to the fact that it was the only thing of the sort which Eton possessed, and which was open to the whole school. Any one who gained it therefore was at once marked out as the best scholar among the boys; and the honour of being acknowledged the first out of eight hundred was really something which anybody would have been proud to obtain. It was useless my going in for it, as I had no chance whatever of success; and though this does not deter some people, I had no inclination to exhibit my own defects. Mason, however, who was next to me in school, thought proper to go in, and as I met him coming away from the last paper he gave me a dismal account of what he had been about.

"I was a fool," he began, "even to think of trying it ; but, thank heaven, it's all over now."

"What, is it not such easy work as the Albert?"

"No, I should think not. They keep you in much longer, and it's the same old Latin and Greek over and over again."

"Who's going to get it, do you think?"

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "I suppose some confounded Tug."

"Altogether," I said, laughing, "you're not pleased with the whole thing."

"No, I should think not ; I have made such a fool of myself. It's all very well for some fellows to go in, but I don't recommend any one to do so who doesn't think he can get it."

To me such an examination would always have been an unpleasant thing. There is a strain upon the mind without much hope of any result. But still many go in, thinking that they are gaining a certain amount of credit by merely putting their names down. And perhaps after all it does good in making them work and prepare for it, though I should never consider it very agreeable.

The result was given out the day before we broke up, and, as may be imagined, Mason did not get it, nor was he even among the select. His prophecy however was fulfilled : a Tug of the name of Rust was declared scholar, but an Oppidan had run him very hard, and Knottesford at Carter's was medallist.

On this one occasion during the year the triumph of mind received the same reward as the success of physical exertions. The contest in the schools seemed of such

general importance as to entitle the winners to an ovation. The Oppidan at all events must be honoured by those whose champion he had been. A public "hoisting" accordingly took place, with the same cheering and enthusiasm which would have greeted a successful "stroke" on the most exciting race night.

CHAPTER VII.

SUMMER—THE RIVER.

“The bark that bore a prince went down,
The waves rolled sweeping on.”

Mrs. Hemans.

IF I had hitherto enjoyed each summer half, and I looked upon it as the happiest portion of the whole year, much more was I likely to do so now when I knew that it was my last season at Eton, and that my time had to be made the most of. I plunged at once therefore into all the amusements possible. Boating and bathing, with an occasional saunter towards the Playing Fields, formed the occupation of most of my day. Schoolwork was got over with as little trouble as possible; only just sufficient pains being taken to make it pass muster. For besides the perfect disability to work during the summer, I was now in Sixth Form, and therefore had nothing further to look forward to, or any particular reason for studying in a more than ordinary degree to please the authorities. It was all very well to put on one's best behaviour when it was a question of admission to increased dignity; but when that was once gained the motive for exertion ceased, and it became sufficient to guard against falling below the average instead of striving to outdo it.

There were two vacancies on the Oppidan side of Sixth Form when we came back after Easter. These eventually were filled up by Mason and myself, but neither of us had any right to take possession of them until regularly authorized to do so by the Doctor. It was a little piece of form kept up with a view to adding dignity to the position, and accordingly the places in the inner circle remained vacant, as though the head master was not bound to dispose of them except at his own free will.

We had sat nearly a fortnight in our old places against the wall, when one day, just as school was over, the Doctor called out, "Norton, wait afterwards." This time I knew it was not a case of flogging, so remained tolerably calm until every one else had left the room.

"I wished to tell you," he said, speaking slowly and measuredly—"I wished to tell you, that I have no objection to your taking your place as Sixth Form, upon the usual conditions."

I made a sort of bow and remained silent, for I hardly knew whether I was expected to say anything or not. He continued, after a pause :

"You know what those are. That you will put a stop to anything wrong which you may know to be going on ; and use whatever influence you may possess for good ; above all things setting a good example for others in your own conduct."

I still was silent, so at last he said, "Do you accept those conditions ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well ; then for the future you may take your place. That is all I had to say."

Thus I was made Sixth Form, and for the future sat

at the octagon table in the centre of the room, instead of near the wall. I had also the honour of making speeches in Upper School on certain public occasions, and of coming into church later than any one else except the Provost and Fellows. Beyond this, and the release from shirking the masters, my position was in nowise altered or improved. But it gratified one's vanity being one of a select number, and certainly it was better to appear on the first page of the school list than half way down the second.

After this, as I said, I got through my work respectably, but was decidedly fonder of the river than my own room. In the evenings Pryor and I would sit together, for he liked the arm-chair, and was also fond of discussing all the little news and scandal which prevailed in the school. But during the day time he was always with the eleven in the Playing Fields ; and though that was not quite my line of amusement, still I found other things to occupy me and prevent my remaining indoors.

Our crew were not very energetic in their river practice. Many of them had other occupations, and the rest were probably lazy ; so that I really think the Ten scarcely went out more than four or five times during the whole summer. We used then to row up quietly to Surly, and thus purchased the honour of being called a crew by the minimum amount of exertion. It was certainly a case of *otium cum dignitate*.

To make up for this sort of public inactivity on my part, I was always engaged in numberless private expeditions, which perhaps were pleasanter from their independent nature than the more formal progresses in a long boat. Either one could scull up the river and bathe, or

three of us would make a party in a gig to go up beyond Locks, and visit Surly in quiet, or perhaps even get as far as Monkey. The latter was a favourite place, partly from its distance, but also from its being really pretty and well situated. It was a little island in the middle of the stream, on which was a small house, which had been built by a former Duke of Marlborough as a fishing lodge, but now had degenerated into a tavern. In this house was a dining-room, the walls of which were covered with the old paintings of monkeys in every sort of attitude, and so gave a name to the place.

It was quite early in the summer when one day, Wimborne, Barker, and myself, agreed to go up after four as far as this little island. There was to be short church, that is to say, service without any music, and so we calculated that there would be plenty of time for us before six o'clock.

"The moment we get out of church we must run up to the raft," said Barker, as we discussed our plan after dinner; for he and I both belonged to the same house, while Wimborne was at an opposite one.

"Yes, that's all right," said I. "I suppose Wimborne will come as fast as he can too."

"Oh, yes, I'll tell him in church."

"We must get locks first, before the rush comes."

"Of course," he answered. "If we are not in time, and have to wait for the second opening, we shall never get there at all."

"That's settled then; we meet at the raft."

"Yes."

As fast as we could run, all three of us rushed up town after church regardless of the undignified haste in our

movements, and soon got through the operation of changing and were off in our boat. The steerage strings were of course intended to be taken alternately by each of us, so that all might get a fair share of rest ; but as we started, the order was Barker stroke, myself bow, and Wimborne steering.

Our coxswain was certainly a curious looking fellow. He was a noble peer who boarded at the house opposite Mr. Argles's, and from this circumstance and from being very near us in the school list he had become tolerably well known to Barker and myself. Tall and thin, he looked as if he had outgrown his strength, and was decidedly delicate, as the care which he took of himself would testify. He was now steering because he wished to have his share first, in order that he might not have to sit in the cold wind after he had become heated.

"Well, we're off first of all," he said, as Barker and I settled down to our work.

"There are two boats coming behind us though," I said.

"Oh, never mind them ; there'll be room for them as well as for us."

"Yes," said Barker, "if we all pull hard so as not to let the squash get up with us. Row on all."

"All, being you and I," was my remark, laughing.

"Yes, it comes natural. Row on."

"I'll tell you what," said Wimborne, after some reflection, "the best way of dividing the steering will be to let me take it as far as locks, then one of you will take it up to Monkey and down again to locks, and the third will take us home."

"But you'll give two of us too much rowing in that middle piece."

"I know it will be longer," he said. "But then there'll be the rest at Monkey half way, which will make up."

"All right, I don't mind."

"Nor I," said Barker, "more especially as I expect to steer then."

"We'll toss up for that," I said, "when we get to locks."

"All right, but don't let's talk so; we shall row twice as hard in silence."

Lower Hope, Upper Hope, and then Athens successively appeared in sight, while we still kept our place first on the river. Others were toiling after us, but none gained; and there was no longer any doubt as to our getting the advantage of first locks.

"We're safe enough now," I said, as we drew on towards Rushes. "We shall soon be able to halloo for the gates to open."

"We must have come up uncommonly well," said Wimborne, "there's nobody at Athens yet."

"No more there is. It's odd to have got here rowing quicker than the walkers."

"Perhaps nobody is going to bathe this afternoon."

"Well, we can't stay to find out. Rushes will soon hide them from us if they are coming."

Quickly we passed onwards, and soon the locks came in sight, as was testified by a fresh unloosing of our steerer's tongue. "Locks," he shouted as hard as he could at the top of his not very powerful voice, and the same cry was re-echoed and prolonged indefinitely by us as we still worked at the oars. Lo-ocks, lo-o-ocks, we shouted till we fairly grew hoarse, while the pause made in the middle of the words effectually took away any little breath which there might be left in our bodies.

But the cry did its work ; the lock-keeper emerged from his habitation and opened the gates ; so that when we got up there we rowed straight in without being kept waiting, which was all that we wanted.

"Well, that's all right," I said, as we sat panting and puffing with our exertions, while waiting for those behind us to come up.

"We came in beautifully," said Wimborne. "Look what a way those fellows are behind us."

"Oh, we can't wait for them. I say, when are you going to shut the gates?"

This last remark was addressed to the lock-keeper, for now that we were in ourselves, we had no wish to be kept waiting for others, instead of passing through at once as we could have wished.

"Why you see, sir," answered the man, "them in the first three boats be very near ; them must be waited for, sir."

"Well, but after that you'll shut the gates, won't you ? We want to get up to Monkey," said Barker.

"All right, sir, we'll shut 'em."

So eventually, much to our own satisfaction, we found ourselves one of four boats who were all as anxious to get forward as we were. There was of course ample room for us, and indeed a great deal too much, as the sequel will show ; for there being no particular reason to make ourselves fast to one place, we swung about with a carelessness that brought its reward upon us afterwards.

"Here comes the water in," said some one, as the bottom sluices of the upper gate began to open, and the commotion of the waters seemed to show that there was a new flood coming in upon us.

"Keep hold of the chain," shouted another in front of us ; but as we were behind, and not so near the turmoil of the gates, we paid no attention to what apparently did not concern us.

"We ought to have kept to the side though," said Wimborne, instead of floating across stream like this.

"It doesn't matter," I said ; "there are so few boats here that we are in nobody's way, and the man's pole from above will soon shove us out straight."

The waters rose rapidly, and we watched them gradually mounting up towards their proper level without paying any great attention to our own position, which we thought needed it not. But suddenly we began to feel that one end of our boat was rising much faster than the other, and Barker and myself turned round at the same moment to ascertain the cause.

"Halloa, look here," he cried, "we've stuck in the wood-work."

"What's that ? Let's see."

"Why look, there's her nose fast under that plank, and as it can't rise with the water, we shall fill in a minute."

"Well," I said, "look sharp, let's all three get to this end, and try if we can't get her clear by sinking it lower and then pushing off."

The fact was, that while we had been paying no attention, the bows of our boat had drifted against the side, and got under a ridge of plank which ran along the lock. Then as the water rose we rose with it, and it was not till this ridge prevented any further rising that we found we were in difficulties. It was too late now to remedy them ; the iron nose of our boat formed a sort of projecting

hook, which kept us as we were, and none of the efforts to disengage ourselves were of any use.

"We can't do it," said Barker, "and we shall be swamped in a minute. Let's get on to the bank."

It was too high above us for him to jump on to, but he took a spring at it and caught it with his hands, so that those who were above could lay hold of him and drag him into safety.

This appeared to be the only thing for us to do, but I was very dubious as to my powers of reaching the top. The sides of course went straight down, and the boarding made them as smooth as possible, so that if I missed the top I must come down into the water. But there was no help for it, and so the fatal leap was taken. It happened as I had feared ; I missed my grasp at the top, and came straight down again towards the water. Luckily the chain was hanging loose, and I seized it as I fell, so it prevented my sinking deep into the stream ; but there I hung, half in the water and half out of it, and not seeing at all clearly how my position was to be altered. It was impossible to help laughing, especially when I saw that Wimborne was in the same position ; and there we both hung, as though we had been fastened to the slimy sides, without the power of moving. Climbing up them was impossible since they were smooth all the way down ; all that we could depend on was a strong hand from above to raise us. The help came at last ; I grasped an arm which was let down to save me, and with the other hand attempted to raise myself by a sort of spring out of the water. In this way I scrambled up to the top.

Wimborne was saved in the same way, but we were both wet almost up to the middle.

"What's to be done now?" I said, as we stood on the bank.

"Oh, I must go home at once," he said, "I'm so wet and cold."

"What do you say, Barker?"

"Oh, I am ready for anything," he said. "But you'd really better go home, Wimborne, if you feel cold."

"Yes," he said, "I think I must. I'm very sorry, but I don't want to catch cold."

"All right then," I answered. "I suppose you had better. We shall most likely go on to Surly."

He left us at once, and very rightly, for in his delicate state of health no risks could be run. Barker and I remained, not knowing exactly what to do, but not at all inclined to go home.

"We might just as well paddle on to Surly," I said; "we shall get dry in that way as well as in any other."

"Yes, I think so," he answered. "It would be rather feeble to go back straight from here."

"Well then, let's see about our boat."

The others had gone off after witnessing our mishap, and had left us alone with the lock-keeper. His long pole was at once put into requisition to disengage our boat; and with such effect did he make use of it, that after one or two shoves her nose was disengaged from the wood-work and appeared above the surface. She was naturally more than half full of water, but this was a comparative trifle, as we knew that we could soon empty her when she had been guided out towards the bank. This was again done for us by means of the long pole, and at last we got hold of our craft again, and successfully turned her bottom upwards on the shore of the island.

The cushions remained very wet, but that could not be helped, and we both thought that the exertion of rowing would keep that part of our body warm. So again we bravely took our seats, and after some difficulties, owing to having no one to guide us, reached Surly in safety.

“Hot brandy and water is the first thing,” was my observation.

“I believe it will be the best thing. We’re so wet,” he answered ; and two tumblers were accordingly ordered.

“What a bore it is not having been able to get to Monkey.”

“Yes,” he said, “I’m awfully sorry ; but I must say it was amusing to see you two hanging on for your life.”

“Of course it was. I knew that, though I was so uncomfortable.”

“I never laughed so much in my life,” he said. “And then Wimborne coming up as pale as a ghost, and in the most doleful manner telling us he must go home.”

“He didn’t think it at all a laughing matter,” I said. “But he was quite right to go home ; I only hope he won’t be any the worse.”

“I hope not. But after all I wish we had got to Monkey.”

“Of course you do ; so do I. We’ll go there some other day.”

“Yes, if our friend survives.”

Fortunately for him and for those interested in him, he not only survived, but never felt the slightest inconvenience from his ducking. He had run all the way home, which had kept him warm, and then had acted like

Barker and myself, and had imbibed large potations of hot brandy and water, which had proved a sovereign specific against any chill which he might have contracted. Thus he was not only cheerful the next morning, but ready to embark again upon the perilous waters, and listened eagerly to our proposals of attempting Monkey upon some other occasion.

That occasion very soon came, for our disappointment only made us more anxious to accomplish what in the first instance we had failed in. For our second attempt, however, we chose a different time. Instead of waiting till the afternoon, the idea suggested itself of going up there to breakfast. We might all of us manage to say our lesson by eight o'clock, and then there were three clear hours before the next school. It is true that there was always a preparatory "construing" before eleven o'clock at our tutor's, but now that we were all so high up in the school we could take the liberty of missing it without expecting any serious consequences.

"Well, here you are," said Wimborne, as I appeared at Goodman's about five minutes after eight.

"Yes, are you changed? I'll be ready in a minute."

"Barker's up-stairs. Look sharp."

This time we got through Locks without any misadventure, and rowed in triumph past Surly, rejoicing that we could now accomplish something higher. The morning was a most beautiful one, the sun shone bright upon us; but there was a delightful freshness in the air which proved that it had not long risen, and that we should not be too much scorched by its rays. Then there was the peculiar stillness of a summer morning; everything seemed quiet except the cawing of the rooks; the trees stood

motionless, and the gently monotonous ripple of the water proclaimed the absence of any disturber upon its surface. We were the only boat upon it perhaps for miles, and the sense of quiet and uninterrupted possession of its stream gave us a novel sensation compared to the usual bustle and excitement.

"How awfully jolly this is," said Barker, as we rowed on.

"Isn't it? I like these early mornings so much. They're worth all the rest of the day put together."

"There's not a soul about," he continued; "we might be in the most deserted place possible."

"That's just what I like," said Wimborne, "the solitude. And then the sunlight; look at it on those trees and the water beyond."

"I vote we come up constantly to breakfast."

"I should like to do so," said Barker. "It's better than having tough rolls at my dame's."

"Wouldn't our fags like it?" I said. "They would have nothing whatever to do."

"It would be a good thing to club together," said Wimborne, "and make up an eight out of our fags, who should pull us up to Monkey."

"To make up for their having no other work. But I expect we should find it rather slow sitting idle. Don't you think so, Norton?"

"I should think we should, indeed. Why, what I like about this is that it gives us something to do, and takes us out of the way of fellows we don't care about."

"Well, it would be a bore, after all," confessed Wimborne, "to have a lot of Lower boys about one, listening hard to everything one said."

We soon got to a part where the stream became uncommonly rapid, and required all our exertions to meet it.

"You've got the best of it now, Norman, steering there."

"I don't know," said I, pretending to be solemn ; "it requires a great exercise of judgment."

"And rowing requires a great exercise of muscle, which is much more fatiguing."

"Look here," I asked, "shall I try the far channel?"

"Oh, no, stick to the Eton side. The other side of those islands is so frightfully shallow, we should be sure to run aground."

"We should escape the stream."

"Yes," said Barker, "but we should be twice as long, what with the shoals and the weeds. I've tried it in an outrigger before now."

"All right then. Here we go, straight on."

There was a stronger stream here than almost any other place on the river ; but the oars worked manfully at their task, and after a time we began to draw in sight of the island. Nothing very much was to be seen at this end, for the house was at the other extremity facing towards Maidenhead. The proper landing-place was there also, stone steps in front of the building going down into the water. But for the convenience of all parties, a rough sort of board had been put up at the nearest point to Eton, and a footway had been trodden down through the wilderness at that end towards the house.

We steered straight into the bank, and scrambled out as we could on to the rough ground. The next thing

was to fasten our boat, and then with our coats upon our arms we walked on in the direction of breakfast. The signs of cultivation were not very great as we traversed the part nearest to us. Long grass and shrubs covered this extremity ; but soon the prospect improved, and signs of a promiscuous sort of kitchen garden appeared. The great feature in the foreground was a little pavilion, which seemed to act as a sort of advanced guard to the house. The roses which climbed about it gave it a picturesque look, but also showed by their growth that it was not kept in very good order. This indeed was the case with the whole island. The open space of grass in the centre was irregular and unmown ; while the fringe of apple trees and cabbages which surrounded it told that the useful received more attention than the ornamental. The house itself was low, but in former days may not have been uncomfortable. It had fallen, however, from its ancient glories, and not the least remarkable thing about its decay was what might be called a perfect change of faces. The old front, with the steps to the water, had been almost entirely abandoned, and the trees had closed in upon it so as to prevent its being fully seen ; and now the back part had taken the place of honour, and become the front in its turn. What we saw as we approached was a centre in the form of a bow, flanked on each side by small wings, one of which gave suspicious indications of being the kitchen of the establishment.

“Well, Franklin,” I said, as we neared the comfortable figure of our host, “we want some breakfast.”

“What’ll you have, sir ?” he asked.

“I want to know what there is first.”

“Well, sir, you can have a chicken ; or there are

some small ducklings," he added, "but they are no great size."

"Oh, never mind, we'll have the ducks, if there are some."

"Yes, by all means," said Barker; "and some poached eggs and bacon."

"How long will they take doing?" I asked.

"Oh, not long, sir. Because, you see, sir, I half-roasted a pair of ducks last night, thinking some gentlemen might be up this morning, so they'll be ready directly."

"Very good, as soon as you can."

We were quite ready for our breakfast, besides not having a very great deal of time to spare. But until it was actually on the table there was nothing to do but loiter about the island. We looked into a long sort of building, which may have been built as a ball-room, but at present looked rather like a deserted barn; and then we went on to the pavilion, where we amused ourselves on the upper story, knocking the balls about on a dilapidated billiard table.

Franklin, however, did not keep us long, and soon we saw signs which made us at once take our places at a little table under one of the trees. We did justice to everything that was put before us, and really all was excellent of its kind, besides having the additional sauce of hunger to help it down.

"Ducks are good, sir, eh?" asked Franklin, as he stood complacently watching us.

"Yes, but there's not enough of them."

"Ah, you must come later, sir, when they're grown a little bigger. Never be so tender as they are now, though, sir."

"I want to know," asked Wimborne, "what you do with that barn, there?" and he pointed to the detached building.

"Why, sir, parties use it sometimes after a picnic."

"What, for dancing?"

"Yes, sir."

"But what good do you get out of it? Is it any use?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Why, you see, in the Ascot week, when the house is crowded with visitors, I make up seven or eight servants' beds there."

"I see," I said; "so you make it pay."

"Oh, it helps then," he said. "Will you have some beer, sir?" he asked, as he saw we were coming to an end.

"Yes, please."

Our host thereupon left us, in order to fetch it. He was a good sort of man, and I should think had a very fair amount of business on his island. Besides the Ascot week, when of course his prices were raised, there were continual picnics, and numberless visits from the Eton boys; so his time during the summer was fully occupied. The winter must have been a dreary season, but at present everything looked so bright and shining that one could hardly picture to oneself the reverse.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DERBY AND ASCOT.

“They rode, they betted.”
Princess.

“WILL you put into my dame's Derby ?” was the question I asked every one as I went round the house one night.

“How much have you got ?” asked Trevor, who was loitering about under the passage gas lamp.

“I have got something out of everybody,” I said ; “very nearly, that is to say.”

“Have you really ?”

“Yes ; some of the new fellows don't quite understand it, but then I explain.”

“And what do you say ?”

“Why, I say, ‘You see this is a lottery, in which you draw the names of the different horses entered for the Derby. The one who draws the winner gets the first prize,’ and so on.”

“Tickets one shilling each, or three for half-a-crown, I suppose,” said Trevor.

“That's it. Shall I put you down for three ?”

“Well, I don't know,” he said. “Yes, I think you may.”

"All right ; come along now, and we'll go into some other rooms."

It was getting near the time when the Derby was to be run, and the whole school was, as usual, in a fever of excitement. Every one became mad after racing, and all the conversation which one heard was as to the chances of success which each horse possessed. Bets of course were plentiful, though the sums invested remained moderate ; but all seemed to have acquired a passion for speculation, and it would certainly have been difficult to have found out any among us who had successfully withstood the reigning passion of the day.

Under these circumstances lotteries became universal. Almost every house got up one of its own, confined to its own particular members, and it was in this cause that I was now occupied, going round the house to collect subscriptions. Few were ever so cautious as to refuse risking a shilling, when there was the chance of winning five and twenty ; and so we always calculated that upon an average there would be as many shillings collected as there were boys in the house. For if some were prevented from subscribing by conscience or poverty, these deficiencies would be made up by those who paid their half-crowns, and so secured three chances for their money.

"And when are you going to have the drawing ?" asked Trevor.

"I don't know exactly ; as soon as all the fellows have paid up."

"To-morrow night, after supper, I should think would do."

"Yes, it ought to," I answered. "We'll stick up a notice in the morning."

"By-the-by," he said, "they're going to draw the school lottery to-morrow after four. I forgot that."

"Well, it won't interfere with us. It's at the 'Christopher,' I suppose."

"Commonly called the 'X,'" he put in.

"Well, it's all the same thing. I shan't go there."

"Nor shall I," he said. "We shall hear soon enough who have got the favourites."

Our conversation went on as we proceeded from room to room, in the attempt to extract subscriptions from each occupant. Many of those who were lower down in the school were unfortunately penniless, and deplored their inability to comply with our demands. But such cases had been foreseen, and my selection of this particular night for the collection had been in a great measure owing to the fact that it was the regular time for the weekly allowances ; and as Mrs. Seely would be bringing round shillings for all the house, many of them might be judiciously secured, and so add to the fund for prizes.

The little bag of coin came round as usual after prayers, and as its mistress went through the house, I followed in rear, so as to be enabled to renew my appeal to any who had before pleaded inability.

"It is robbery," she said, laughing, "taking away the money from the little ones in that way."

"Not at all," I answered. "They are not obliged to subscribe, and they like the chance of winning five-and-twenty shillings."

"But you know some of them dare not refuse when you ask them."

"That's their own fault; they oughtn't to be so bashful."

I dare say it was the case that many put in who would

never have spontaneously come forward to do so ; for it certainly was the case, that when I myself was a Lower boy, I scarcely ever dared to refuse the Captain of the house, so much was I impressed by his dignity and position. But the collector of course never paid any serious attention to these considerations ; he looked upon it as his duty to extract as much money as possible without actual compulsion, and quieted his conscience with the thought that by so doing he was at all events gratifying the wishes of the multitude.

The next day there was a double excitement for all my dame's, since the school Derby as well as our own were both to be drawn before night. The former had become one of the regular yearly institutions of the school, and everybody was invited to subscribe on every opportunity, either at absence, before chapel, or in their houses. The consequence was that more than five-and-twenty pounds had been collected, and the chance of drawing a good horse, or at all events one that could be sold for a profit, was most eagerly looked forward to by the subscribers.

“ Who do you think has got Morocco ?” shouted Trevor, as he burst into my room after four.

“ Who ? tell me.”

“ Why, Parry. It's a shame that a fellow rolling in money should get such a horse.”

“ And who has got any of the others ?” I asked.
“ Have I got a horse at all ?”

“ You and I were both blanks, I'm afraid,” was his answer ; “ but there's some Fourth Form at Evans's who has got Wild Duck, and Robinson has got Armourer. I forgot the rest.”

“Have any of them been sold yet?”

“No,” he said, “I don’t think so. Parry wants five pounds for Morocco, and eight more if it wins ; I know that.”

“He won’t get it. By-the-by, did Snip get anything?”

“Oh, he drew some wonderful horse, I believe, which doesn’t start.”

“I’m sorry for that,” I said. “I wish he had got a decent one.”

“Why?”

“Why, because it’s the only way he can get paid for the trouble of making up the tickets and everything. He does all that, you know, on condition that he is allowed to have seven tickets free himself.”

“I didn’t know that,” said Trevor. “I thought he was regularly paid.”

“No, he takes his chance of winning instead ; but I don’t recollect his ever getting anything lately.”

“Well, none of us deserving fellows have been lucky. We’ll do better after supper to-night.”

The labour of arranging all the tickets for such a comprehensive thing as the school lottery might well be deputed to some professional hand ; and the services of Snip, who was one of the hovering “locals” of Tap and the Wall, were not unreasonably put into requisition for a task of such magnitude. But where the list of subscribers only mounted up to thirty names, instead of to something like five hundred, the work was by no means so laborious, and I felt perfectly competent to manage all the preparations for my dame’s lottery unaided.

The slips of paper were all ready and folded when we

went down to supper ; the names of subscribers in one bundle, and the names of horses in another. Mr. Argles detained us a little by a sort of post-prandial oration after the cold mutton and beer had been carried off ; but as this was only on things in general, with casual allusions to his own pigs, which, as he took care to impress upon us, had been fatted on milk and rice, we became rather impatient, and at length flatly told him that we wanted to draw our Derby. This had the desired effect ; and we got up-stairs in what was after all tolerably good time.

“Look here,” I said, as everybody crowded into my room, “you must leave us space round the table for the drawing.”

“Who’s going to draw ?” asked Pryor, who had deposited himself, as usual, on the sofa.

“Why, you are,” I answered, “if you will.”

“All right ; but what are you going to do ?”

“I’ll write the names down as they come out. It’s better that the fellow who has made up the papers shouldn’t draw them. You and Trevor will do perfectly well.”

“Very good, I’ll draw,” said Trevor. “Give me a hat, somebody.”

It was not difficult to get hold of two of these, and then the drawing began. Pryor led off with a plunge into his hat, and brought up the name of Egerton. Trevor quickly followed in the same way, and a horse soon rose to the surface rejoicing in the appellation of Cat-o’-nine-tails. Others followed, and as each name was shouted out it was registered on my list, with the horse that belonged to it attached to the side. But at

first no great favourites appeared. Outsiders were plentiful, and horses that could never by any possibility start cumbered my sheet of paper ; but the best names seemed to be keeping themselves at the bottom, and those of us who were still left in congratulated ourselves on thinking that our chances were improving.

"I believe some one has taken out Morocco and Wild Duck," said Pryor. "They are never coming."

"Nor are you either," said Trevor. "I believe some one has taken you out."

"That looks like something," I observed, as a very tightly folded piece of paper was unrolled.

"Valentia!" shouted Trevor.

"Not so bad either," said the owner, whose name was Young. "Anybody give me three half-crowns for it?"

"No, I should think not," said another voice. "I'll give you two."

"All right, done with you ; and ten bob more if it wins."

"Oh, I don't know. But it's sure not to, so I don't mind."

At length it came to Pryor's turn to call his own name, and we watched eagerly what would follow from Trevor's hat. A pause—a longer pause than usual—and then came out the name of the first favourite, Morocco.

"Ah, that's pretty good," said he. "Now, Norton, comes your turn. You'd better get Wild Duck."

I wished I could ; but though I did not succeed, a very fair horse came up of the name of Armourer, and I knew at once that I could sell it for more than the shilling it had cost me. Wild Duck, as it so happened, was left in till the very last, and then fell to the lot of

one of the dirtiest and untidiest of our Lower boys, so rare are the occasions on which good fortune falls to the lot of those who deserve it.

Many were the sales and changes which took place before the actual day of the race. Parry and Pryor both sold their horses ; the former for five pounds, the latter for eight shillings, with the reservation, however, of something extra in case of their winning. Wild Duck and Armourer remained in the hands into which they had first fallen ; and I was rewarded for my prudence by a small profit which my horse eventually brought me in.

The result of the race was made known to us on the Wednesday, by a telegraph which came to Windsor. Numbers of our amateur book-makers had besieged the railway office from the first moment after four ; and when at length the news was given out, everybody rushed down town to communicate to the whole school what they had just heard themselves. By five o'clock it was known all over the place that Wild Duck had come in first, beating Armourer by a neck, and that Morocco was third. The bulk of the prizes thus went to those who knew least how to spend their money ; but I consoled myself by the thought that ten shillings at all events came into my own pocket, as the second prize in my dame's lottery.

Some of our friends had been able to get away on leave, and so to see the race, which was always one of the highest ambitions of an Eton boy. For the generality, however, this was impossible ; and if any exertions were to be made at all for the sake of the turf, every one agreed to keep them back till there was more hope of a

successful result. Ascot would soon be coming, and then it would be by no means hopeless to attempt seeing something of a race-course.

"I always wonder," said Pryor, as he sat in my room doing nothing one night—"I always wonder that fellows will take such an amount of trouble to see so little."

"What, you mean the fellows who go to Ascot?"

"Yes. If everything goes right with them, they can only be there ten minutes or a quarter of an hour."

"And there's always the chance of being switched and turned down, besides the certainty of a tremendously long run."

"I wouldn't take the trouble to do such a thing," he said, "to see one race, and that probably a bad one."

"I recollect," I said, "when I was a Lower boy almost everybody went to Ascot."

"Yes, I know. I went one year, but that was enough for me. I recollect we just saw the end of one race, and then had to come back again as hard as we could. I never was so done in my life."

"There are a lot of these fellows going this year from my dame's."

"Well, I hope they may get there," he observed. "It's a good thing to keep up the spirit of enterprise. Eton would have sunk rather low if nobody went to Ascot."

"That's just what I think, though I wouldn't go myself. But I told all my fags that if any one of them got safe there and back, he should be excused fagging for three days."

"And are any of them going?"

"I believe young Merriman is; but he's so fat he'll never get there."

Our days were decidedly past for running ; and the exertions and the risks of Ascot were left almost exclusively to the Lower half of the school. One got too old and too dignified, as one approached the top of Fifth Form, to condescend to such adventures ; and then too, most of us had attempted the same thing in our early days, and therefore had no very particular desire for the repetition either of the pleasures or the penalties attendant upon it.

“Don’t you wish you were going off with those fellows ?” said Darrell, as we came out of church and watched the progress of several individuals as they rushed out and went up town as hard as they could.

“No, I don’t,” was my answer. “They may come in for the last race of all, and perhaps not for that.”

“Well, I’m not sorry either that I am staying behind. I shouldn’t like to have to run eight miles there and eight miles back.”

“No,” I replied, “I shall content myself with going up to the Weir instead. Come along too ; I’ll scull you up.”

“But I mayn’t bathe there, you know.”

“No, but I can take you up ; that’s one of the few advantages they give Sixth Form.”

“All right, then I’ll come. We’ll toss who shall scull up and who down.”

The Weir was by far the best of all the bathing places on the river, and in the summer the enjoyment of it was one of the greatest advantages possible. It was some way off—a mile further up the river than Athens ; but then the extra distance was amply compensated for by the freshness of the water and the shade of the trees

which surrounded it. Athens had the open stream, which was pure enough, but the bank was bare and destitute of the smallest shrub ; only a wooden railing with the towels marked the enclosure set apart for the bathers. But at the Weir—Boveney Weir, as its name really was—everything was better, the river fresher, its shores pleasanter. There was a great deal more privacy too about it. Instead of being actually on the towing-path, we crossed over on to an island where there were plenty of trees to shade us, and no inhabitants to disturb us save the lock-keeper, whose house faced the other way. Then by the side of the river, just below the foam of the Weir itself, was a sort of little clearing, an open space of grass surrounded by trees, from which we could take a plunge into the stream. And when there the water itself seemed so much purer and better than anywhere else. The sound and the freshness of the smell as it rushed through the sluices and between the piles had altogether a sort of exhilarating effect upon us ; and the common saying was very true, that when we were in the midst of all the bubbles and disturbance it was really like bathing in soda-water.

“I always come here now,” I said, as our boat grated on the point of the island. “I like it ten times as well as Athens.”

“Yes, I should think so,” answered Darrell, as he jumped out. “I should always come here too if I might.”

“Why, you can always come whenever you like. It’s not difficult to get some one to go with.”

“Well, you see, it’s only Sixth Form that may bring their friends up ; the Eight and the Eleven haven’t that power.”

"That's true. However, we are here now, and we shall have it pretty much to ourselves."

"There are one or two fellows on the other side near the tumbler," he observed.



"Yes, so there are ; we'll join them in a minute ; the stream is quite low to-day, so it will be easy work."

Clothes were thrown off under the trees ; then a little run and a small header carried us into the stream. It was hot weather, and there was very little water flowing over the Weir, so that no great exertions were required to take us to the other side, and we reached the boarding

under the tumbler without feeling at all exhausted. In every weir there is a portion of it which is called by this name ; it is always the end where the piles and woodwork seem to cease, and the water flows over in a sort of unbroken cataract. This is what it usually did in the Boveney tumbler, and as a boarding had been placed underneath it, so that we could stand instead of sinking into the hole, which might otherwise have been caused, we used to enjoy the most copious shower-bath that people could desire.

“It’s awfully low to-day,” shouted Darrell, as we got there.

“So it is. There’s not much danger of being washed off our legs now.”

“No, I should think not ; but it does sometimes do that.”

“Oh, yes. Why, you know, when the river is very full, the water comes rushing over and strikes against the boarding, which is only eighteen inches below the surface, and so runs along it with a frightful force. I saw that fellow Parkins, you know, who is a good swimmer, knocked down and carried off by the stream, and it was all he could do to get across and reach the end of the island out there.”

“I shouldn’t come across on such a day as that.”

“Nor do I ; but on those occasions there’s always the punt cruising about in mid stream.”

We splashed about for some time, and then thought we would try a swim in the upper waters above the Weir. There was no danger of our being carried against the woodwork to-day ; on the contrary, it was as still as glass, and altogether we thought after a few strokes that

it was too black and pond-like for any prolonged enjoyment, so the tumbler was again crossed, and then a straight swim brought us to the shore.

"That's the best bathe that I've had for a long time," was the remark that escaped us both as we left the island. "I shall be inclined for something to eat," I added, "when I get back to my dame's."

"There'll be tea directly after absence," he said ; "and then too we shall hear the account of those fellows who went to Ascot."

I saw my fat friend Merriman at absence ; but he was in such a hot and dusty condition, that I made sure that he had either been on to the course, or at all events some way towards it. When he came into my room, therefore, I was not surprised that the first words he uttered were—"I'm excused fagging, ain't I ?"

"Did you get to Ascot ?" I asked.

"Yes, rather. It was an awful lark ; I was so nearly nailed."

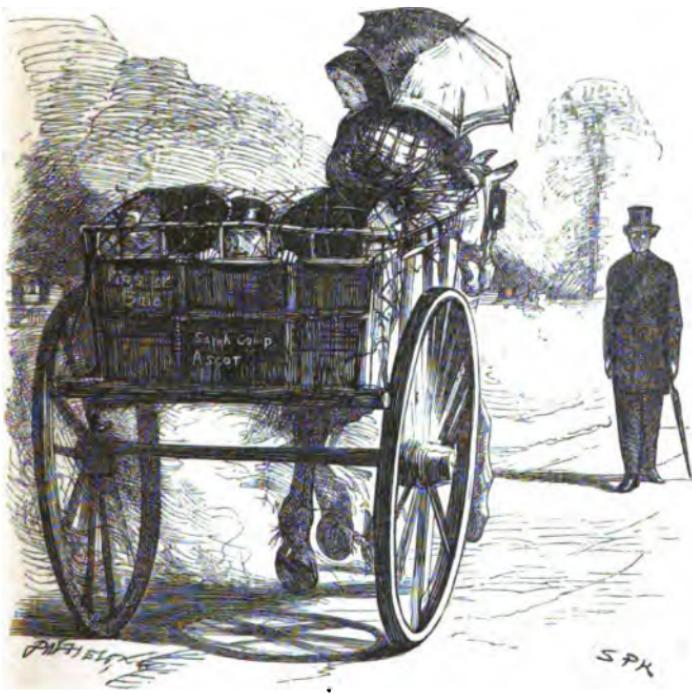
"Let's hear all about it. How did you go ?"

"Why, you know, Rice and I were together, so we started directly after church, and ran up town as hard as ever we could. Then we turned down Peascod Street, and were pretty well pumped by the time we reached the bottom ; so we eased and went along at a quick walk. But the luckiest thing in the world happened to us, for ~~soon~~ ^{quite} a cart came up, and the old woman with

Clothes were ~~ting~~ ^{ting} by when Rice hallooed to her to run and a small ~~e~~ ^o was going on the way to Ascot. She was hot weather, a little way, but not very far. Still we over the Weir, so ~~tip~~ ^{tip}, and then jolted on. It was rather to take us to the oth^o together, wasn't it ?"

"Yes ; but how far did she take you ?"

"Oh, she took us about a mile and a half or so. It was a help at all events. We got down of course where she turned off, and then started again, running as hard as we could. But we should never have got there at all if



some people I knew hadn't happened to come by. Of course they weren't going to the races at that time of day, but they were coming along the road, and as they came up, stopped and offered us a lift. I was so awfully done, I am sure we should never have got there without

it. The fact was, you know, we were uncommonly lucky in everything. But the best part of the whole thing came off while we were in the carriage. I forgot, by-the-by, to tell you that we had seen Jones while we had been in the old woman's cart, but we had lain down at the bottom, and so passed him in that way without his having any suspicions about our conveyance. I ought to have told you that before; but it doesn't matter. Well, you know, now as we were driving on, suddenly we caught sight of Stevens at a corner of the road on ahead, so we didn't know what on earth to do. We were stumped, because if we got out of the carriage now he must see us, and if we stayed in he was almost certain to catch us, because we saw him stop a carriage some way in front of us. The fact was, he behaved in a beastly shabby manner; he took up his place on one side of the road, and had the impertinence to look into every carriage as it passed."

"Well, there's one thing to be said," I remarked; "you wouldn't have got by on foot."

"No; but it was awfully mean of him; and he actually opened carriage doors."

"I thought there weren't very many on the road."

"There were a whole lot. We were the only ones going our way; but there was a perfect string coming back."

"I see; but go on. How did you get past?"

"Why, we didn't know how to at first; but at last the fellow whose carriage it was suggested that the best way would be to drive on quietly till we came up to him, and then to bob down below the windows, and if he wanted to open the door, why we must jump out at the opposite one and make the best of it."

“That was rather good.”

“Well, we went on, and stooped down as we came near. Of course we couldn’t see what Stevens did, but presently we heard him speak to Mr. Eyre, who was the man to whom the carriage belonged, and instantly he motioned to us to turn the handle on the opposite side. We got it ready, and the moment Stevens began to turn his we turned ours. Mr. Eyre held it a little at first, pretending it had stuck, and so that gave us time to get out while old Stevens was flattening his face against the panel.”

“But do you mean to say he didn’t see you nor the far door opening?”

“No, he didn’t see. Why, you know, it was one of those high old coaches, and so what with that and his own size he couldn’t see in at the windows ; his face came to about a level with the coat of arms ; and then as he was busy trying to open the door, he got so close and was so occupied that he saw nothing.”

“Well, that was awfully good. I should have laughed to see all that.”

“Yes ; I don’t know what happened when he did look in ; perhaps they had shut the other door by that time. We didn’t stay ; we dodged about among the carriages and got off safe ; at least we neither heard nor saw anything of him.”

“And then did you get actually on to the course and see anything ?”

“Oh, yes ; this was quite near, you know, where we were stopped, so we soon ran on and got into the crowd. We just saw one race. After all, that was all we expected to see. It wasn’t a bad one ; six or seven horses started.”

"And who won?"

"I don't know, nor do I care. I saw the race; that's enough."

"Well," I asked, "and how did you get back in time?"

"Oh, you know, there were no perils of masters as we came back; we hadn't even an alarm. Rice and I stuck together, and clung on to the back of a carriage which was coming towards Windsor; and so we got on at a good pace. We left it when about a mile out of Windsor, and ran in. We were in lots of time."

"Were any fellows late, do you know?"

"Yes, I should think so. I saw three or four myself coming in long after second calling. Switched to-morrow for a certainty."

"Which you won't be."

"No; don't you wish I was?"

"Yes, I do," I answered, "just for that piece of impertinence. However, you needn't come to fagging for the next three days."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOURTH OF JUNE.

“The burden of sweet speeches.”
Swinburne.

WHEN the 4th of June came round this year, which it did at the end of the Ascot week, I was in a very different position, and had very different occupations wherewith to pass the day than had been my lot when still a Lower boy. My first half at Eton I had been all eagerness to get out of Upper School, but also all ignorance as to where else I could go ; and the morning had passed on slowly and tediously, from a positive want of anything to do. This was not likely to be the case in my last year. The morning, if anything, was the busiest time of all, and though for the evening new duties had devolved upon me, it was impossible to help looking upon the early part of the day as at all events as fully and as importantly occupied as the later.

Speeches in Upper School were of course what first engaged us as Sixth Form. There was no escape from these, as there had been at a former time ; and since the order had been given out that every speaker was to be in his place by half-past ten, the operation of dressing had to be begun as soon after breakfast as possible. Every preparation was accordingly made ; hot water

sent for, the cleanest shirt laid out, and pomatum put into instant requisition ; but still my dressing was for some time unable to proceed.

“What are you waiting for ?” said Pryor, as he came into my room and found me sitting with nothing but a shirt and drawers on. “Why don’t you put on the rest ?”

“Simply because they are not here,” was my answer. “That fool of a tailor, Denman, promised them in good time, and now it’s nearly ten o’clock.”

“Well, you can’t go into Upper School as you are, though I wish you could. But they’ll be here in plenty of time.”

“I hope so, I’m sure ; but I don’t know.”

“Do you think you can say your speech ?” he asked, laughing.

“Say it ; of course I can. I’ve been able to do that for the last fortnight, and done nothing but go over and over it again ever since.”

“Whose fault was that ?”

“Why,” I said, “it was the fault of the Doctor and Tarver, who insisted on my coming every day after two.”

“I didn’t know it had been every day.”

“Oh, yes, it was. Regularly after dinner we went up into Upper School, and there spouted for the benefit of those two.”

“What, you and Graham and White ?”

“Yes, we three.”

“And then,” continued Pryor, “I suppose you were told when to put out your hand, and when to nod your head, and all that sort of thing.”

“Yes ; and so we went over it day after day, till we knew it and were sick of it.”

"Graham has got another speech, hasn't he?"

"Yes," I answered; "that's the reason, I should think, why they gave me the best part in ours; because, you know, he's above me, and so he ought to have it."

"And how is it that they let White speak?"

"Why, you see, the fact is that there is no one scarcely who knows French. Certainly no one is left who ever got the prize; and Graham and I were the only ones who had ever been select; so when we wanted a third to make up our speech, they were obliged to look below Sixth Form, and choose the best of those who were nearest to it."

"They wouldn't let him speak on an ordinary day."

"No; but on 4th of June they must have a French speech, whatever way they may have to manage it in."

"They won't get one unless your breeches come," said Pryor.

"No, they won't. Just look out of window and see if Denman is coming."

"No, that he's not. But wait a bit—look here, I think this is him. Yes, here he is, coming round the corner."

"Thank heaven," was my reply. "I may actually be dressed in time."

A knock at the door soon followed, and tailor and breeches made their appearance simultaneously, one resting on the arm of the other. All the other portions of my toilet were completed, and it was only this outer shell which was now brought me that was wanted to give the uniform and polished appearance that was required by the outer man. But it was in this alone that all those little niceties could be shown which make

the difference between a well or an ill-dressed man ; and Mr. Denman always judged it to be imperatively necessary that he should himself superintend the putting on of his vestments. Breeches especially required no ordinary amount of attention. They were the tight, old-fashioned things which buckled at the knee ; and ought really to have been so well made and fitted that the wearer should be unable to fasten them himself over the silk stockings, since by stooping to do so he would create wrinkles in the black cloth, even if the stretching of it had no more serious consequences. I was arrayed in these as I stood up, and was most seriously cautioned that I was never to sit down in them, or at all events, not until my public performances were over, when there would not be so much danger in risking what might be the consequence. At last, after much smoothing and bracing up, they were pronounced perfect, and then a coat and waistcoat became comparatively simple. Shoes with enormous buckles covered my feet, but on my head I was allowed nothing ; for in the case of all Sixth Form it was declared by popular opinion that a hat might endanger the smoothness and arrangement of a good head of hair ; and as this was the case even on ordinary speech days, much more was it obligatory for me on the 4th of June to preserve everything neat and in good order.

No one was astonished, therefore, to see among the crowd various individuals bareheaded, with shoes and silk stockings, who kept passing in at the gate on their way towards Upper School. Some were in company with their friends, even with ladies on their arm ; but these they soon took leave of under the colonnade, since the entrance for visitors was at one end through the

Doctor's room, while the way for the speakers and the rest of the boys was at the other, by the door near the chapel.

I was luckily unencumbered, and so passed on quickly up the stairs and towards the desks in the centre of the room, which were appropriated to us. There were two of them, one on each side, which were usually occupied by some master, who had his division in front of him. Now, however, they served as balconies for the orators, and all of us were pressed into them, so as to be ready to descend into the area when our turn came.

"Come along, Norton," said Graham, as I came up to the desk. "We're all three here now; White's on the opposite side."

"That's all right," I answered. "I should think it was pretty nearly time now."

"Yes, it is," said one of the Collegers behind us. "Here comes Mason, and he's about the last of us; and absence must be finished, judging from the crowd of fellows up here."

"Oh, yes; the Provost will be in in a minute."

There was actually a railed passage down the middle to-day, instead of trusty amateur policemen of the Doctor's division; so when the provost appeared, at the head of a long string of distinguished guests, he had no difficulty in making his way to the seats of honour. The raised benches with the ladies formed a bright and many-coloured background, in front of which were chairs and forms, making a sort of horse-shoe, and reserved for any great personages who might honour the speeches with their presence. The Provost, of course, took the centre, and on each side of him were peers, bishops, and

others, ranged at first in order of dignity, but gradually sidling off into a confused mass on each side, where, as among the boys, no pre-eminence except that of each individual's chair was recognized.

The proceedings opened with a speech from Blake, who was one of the Oppidans. The beginning of it, as may be imagined, was somewhat difficult to be heard, since the first sound of his voice had been taken as a signal for the departure of all those lower members of the school who were congregated below the gangway. But when the rush had ceased, then the utterances of some ancient statesman were heard being declaimed with a solemnity and mouthing which could hardly have been equalled by the original orator himself. It was always something heavy and uninteresting which opened the proceedings, because the audience was supposed to have hardly got its attention ready for the first speech, so anything better would have been thrown away on them, besides losing the opportunity of disposing of the inferior speakers at the outset. Blake was one of these heavy dull fellows, who were no credit to their division on such an occasion as this; but since he could not be passed over and put out of the list, the Doctor had thought it best to let him lead off, and thus get rid of him as soon as possible.

Those who followed elicited more cheers and even occasional laughter from the audience. There was a comic speech out of Aristophanes, and here the learned could appreciate the jokes, while the general crowd could not, at all events, be insensible to the gestures and expressions of countenance which the two speakers displayed. Then followed one of Macaulay's Lays, which

boys will always repeat in somewhat of a sing-song way. Virgil came forth better; and after him a German dialogue, which was certainly better received than most of the Latin and Greek ones. On the 4th of June, however, the authorities know that they must study a little to please the taste of their unusual audience; and where ladies and other unclassical visitors are to be gratified, a good portion of what they hear ought to be what they can understand, and the old authors of Greece and Rome have by no means the prominent place which they receive when only Fellows and masters surround the tribune.

"Are you ready now, Norton?" said Graham, as the one before our turn just came to an end.

"Yes, I'm ready; but we must wait till these fellows come back into the desk, or there won't be room for us to pass."

"Now then," he said, as they came up, "you go on first."

We came out from our balcony, and were met by White, who had left his also as he saw us come down. The trio was thus formed; the spectators were in front; and we began our acting. There was indeed something more to be done than a mere speech. Our every-day rehearsals had taught us action, and we were expected to display the outward signs, as well as the tones, of the emotions which we represented. To a boy before such an audience this was nervous work enough; and the freedom of gesture as well as of speech, which hardly comes except by habit, was, I have no doubt, replaced in us by an awkward constraint. The comic scenes, however, of the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, were gone

through with such life as we could each infuse into our parts, and the audience, indulgent for the sake of the piece as well as for the actors, rewarded our exertions with applause. The whole thing, as it turned out, went off very satisfactorily ; everybody of course understood what was said, and we knew our parts so well as to have



no need whatever of the promptings of the Doctor behind us. The speech, in fact, was decidedly a success, and in the accounts given in the morning papers next day, the names of Graham, White, and Norton were mentioned as having been among the best performers on the occasion.

“I’m sure I’m glad it’s over,” were my words as we

withdrew to our desk, after a bow to the assembled company.

"Yes ; but I've got another coming off." You can look on now quietly."

"So I intend to do ; and what's more, to sit down, since my breeches won't have to appear again in public."

My work as an actor was done ; for the rest of the time I reposed as one of the audience, and at last heard Dawson, who was Captain of the Oppidans, make the closing speech, after which the Provost rose to go. The procession of the inner circle departed as it had come ; and then followed a promiscuous crowd, in the midst of which I made my way back to my dame's, and at once proceeded to divest myself of all the garments of antiquity, in order to assume a less peculiar dress.

"What have you been doing all the morning ?" I asked Pryor, as we went into dinner together.

"I've been playing in Upper Club," he answered. "I think 4th of June is the dullest day in the whole year till the evening."

"Was there a good game ?"

"Oh no, but it was better than nothing ; and if one hasn't friends down here there is nothing on earth to do."

"And some people object to their friends coming," I observed, laughing, for I knew what his answer would be.

"Yes, I do for one," he said ; "it's the greatest bore possible."

"What are you going to do this afternoon ?" I asked, as we continued our conversation at the dinner table.

"Oh, the game will go on in Upper Club—I shall be there."

"Everybody almost is giving dinners this afternoon for the visitors. My tutor has got one, I know. The tables are laid out in pupil room, as well as in his dining-room."

"Are you going to it?"



"No, for he only asks boys when they have got friends with them." "And then," said Pryor, "there's a tremendous dinner in the College Hall."

"I know. That's at four o'clock; I should like to go to it."

"Yes, it's a tremendous thing, I believe. They have speeches, and toasts, and all sorts of things."

"It's a glorious place for it at all events."

"I haven't been into it," he said, "since it was restored."

"Oh, you ought really to go and look at it. They've done up the panelling all round, you know, and opened out some fine old fireplaces which had been hidden in the wall ; and, besides that, they have put in some painted glass, so that it all looks very well."

"Well, I shall go in some day."

"You'll have collections there probably at the end of the half, and be warned not to spill the ink over the coloured tiles."

"I shall have plenty of time to observe it then. But look here, here comes another speech ; this is evidently the day for them."

Mr. Argles got up from his seat in the centre of the table, and after giving what was meant to be a sort of benevolent smile all round the room, proceeded to enlighten us on his plans for the evening. It was a favourite topic with him every year to discuss the excellence of his arrangements for the supper, which had now become an annual institution. The great point with him seemed to be, that as he provided for us so liberally, there was no necessity whatever for any excess up at Surly ; we should always find enough, and more than enough, when we came back to fill up any crevices. A certain propriety of behaviour, he declared, ought to be maintained by every boy in the house, because not only was there no excuse for thus bringing discredit upon himself and it, but also there was this much due as a sort of acknowledgment for the liberality with which

all were treated. Good behaviour was to be the return with which this extra indulgence ought to be met.

"I like to hear old Argles go on with the same story year after year," whispered Pryor.

"Yes, one knows it pretty well by this time, what with its coming on 4th of June and on Election Saturday."

"Come along," he said, "that's all," as our worthy dame resumed his seat, and looked complacently around him. So feeling that we were free, we sauntered out towards the street.

The afternoon wore on, and as five o'clock drew near I came in to my dame's, and began to think about preparations for a second toilet. Not for the school, but for the river, were the present changes to be made. The knee-breeches and the tail-coat were thrown aside, and in their place came forth the dark trousers and gold-embroidered jacket belonging to the Monarch. Here everything was loose, and there was no necessity for a perfection of fit; so I put myself into them at once without any aid, and then went to look for Trevor, who I imagined would be doing the same thing in his own room.

"How are you getting on?" were my first words, as I saw him struggling with the shirt collar round his neck.

"Oh, I shall be ready directly—wait a bit."

"All right, there's lots of time."

"Have you seen many people to-day?" he asked, as he went on with his dressing.

"I should think so. I never saw so many before, scarcely."

"But I mean many that you know."

“Well, I can't say I have. There were those one or two fellows who used to be at my dame's, and some others ; but of the other sort of visitors I don't know any.”

“What, you mean ordinary people ; not those whom we have known here ourselves ?”

“Yes. But, I say, you must look sharp. It will strike in a minute.”

“But there are all the Tugs to answer before us, so we shall be in lots of time even then.”

He got on quicker, however, than I expected, and we were in the school-yard before six o'clock. Numbers were there before us, some with their friends and some without them ; and the whole place seemed thronged in a way that could only happen on these great days in the year. Whole parties of friends and relations were to be seen clustering round some gold or silver jacket. The small owners of cocked hats might be seen just emerging from a sea of crinoline which threatened to obscure them ; and even private individuals, who could boast neither silver lace nor blue ribbon, found friends and admirers of their own, who helped to swell the crowd.

The Doctor had seen many such an assemblage before, and therefore took not the smallest notice of it as he ascended the chapel steps. Absence was called precisely in the same way as usual, the cocked hats being lifted with as great readiness as the common black ones. Trevor was below me, and therefore I waited at first after my own name had been called ; but as soon as he had answered we both left the school-yard together on our way to the river. Many were the different sorts

of vehicles which accompanied us, and the whole length of the street became filled with a crowd which hastened to pour itself on to the Brocas.

It was rather tedious getting off, but at last everything was ready, and the Monarch took the lead. Our progress was of course much the same as on any of the ordinary procession days ; the only difference, perhaps, was that to-day we might be somewhat slower, in consequence of having to wait upon the two great tubs which accompanied us containing the bands. Music was of course indispensable, and the regiments stationed at Windsor furnished it ; but the bandsmen were a heavy weight to carry up stream, and in spite of having eight or ten oars to each boat, their speed was none of the quickest.

“We shall never get to Locks at all at this rate,” said some one behind me, as we easied for the fourth or fifth time, in order that the bands might keep up. But at length we really did reach them, and then commenced such a packing within the gates as only took place on these occasions. It would never have done for only a portion of the procession to get through at a time—the whole effect would have been spoilt ; but it was a very difficult thing to find room for all the eights as well as for the tubs together. At last, by economising every bit of space, and locking ourselves as closely together as possible, we all squeezed in, and then the gates were shut. After this there was no great difficulty before reaching Surly, and we all disembarked in order, and, preceded by our flags, entered the enclosure where the tables were.

“I wish we had a sitter,” said Drummond, as he took his place at the top. “Those fellows in the Victory were lucky in getting hold of Lord Wiseman.”

"Yes ; he has given them three dozen of champagne simply for the honour of being pulled up," said some one at the table.

"Never mind ; we won't give away so much, that's all."

The feast began, and we did full justice to it, in spite of the annoyances of a whole crowd leaning over our shoulders, and begging most vociferously for meat and drink, the latter, however, being the most acceptable. Towards the end of our time Drummond got up and proposed various loyal and other toasts, which were duly honoured with cheers and with tumblers of champagne ; all our energies being put forward, and our throats most actively employed, since we knew that these were the signals for breaking up. The word was at last given, and we marched away with our flag in front of us, followed by all the other crews at decent intervals.

It was dark when we got down to Windsor bridge, and the fireworks had begun. Of course we contributed to the general effect by rowing round the eyot as usual. Then when we saw that all had come to an end, we came in to the rafts, and so were ready to start down town again.

Mr. Argles's supper, too, I am happy to say, went off as successfully as any other part of the day. It was very well done, and very well attended ; all the boys of the house, and many visitors formerly or at present connected with it making up the party. All of us gave our dame great credit for his hospitality ; and it certainly shamed those houses where nothing was given but cold provision, with only water to wash it down, in order, as it was said, to avoid all chance of intoxication.

CHAPTER X.

AT HENLEY.

“The measured pulse of racing oars
Among the willows.”

In Memoriam.

ABOUT a week after this, when all thoughts of the 4th of June had disappeared from our minds, Mason and I happened to be standing outside the chapel, not knowing what to do with ourselves. It was a Sunday afternoon, and we had just come out from the service, and were loitering about preparatory to fixing on some means of killing time.

“There go a lot of fellows to Salt Hill, I’ll be bound,” he said, as we watched a group of small boys going along the Slough road.

“Well, shall we go there too?” I asked.

“No, not quite; but I don’t know what else to do. I’m not in the humour for a long walk.”

“Nor am I. Suppose we go up to the Terrace?”

“We shall have to climb up the hundred steps to get there”—and he sighed at the thought. “But after all,” he continued, “I think it will be the best place to go to.”

“Come along then. Have you got a pair of gloves?”

“Yes, but they are anything but good ones,” he

answered, as he produced an old pair of lavenders out of his pocket.

"Well, they're harmless, at all events. Mine are just as bad."

We soon reached the hundred steps which led up to the castle, and ascended them after considerable delay and many rests.

"There's the organ in St. George's," he remarked, as we heard it in the cloisters.

"Yes; you know a lot of our musical fellows go up on Sunday afternoons simply to hear it."

"Well, I'd rather hear the band on the Terrace. If people want music, why don't they come there?"

"A good many people do, I expect, if one may judge by the crowd one sees there. Look at all those people on ahead of us; they're all going there, turning down those steps you see."

"Yes, I see."

We followed their example, and came down on to that part overlooking the slopes. The railway station lay immediately below us; further on was Eton, with its "antique towers" showing very distinctly, and to the left we could trace all the windings of the river as it glistened among the meadows. It was certainly a beautiful view, and superior, as I always thought, to that from the terrace surrounding the garden. An expanse of park must always look well, but there was none of the extent and diversity which could be seen from the other. Still, as the prospect was not new to either of us, we hardly paused, but made our way onward to where the band was playing.

Every one knows Windsor Castle, and therefore every

one knows the sunk garden surrounded by the terrace on the east side of it. It was here that the bands played, one from the cavalry and one from the infantry division of the household troops which were always quartered in the town. On the two grass plots nearest the castle windows, surrounded by statues and flower-beds, the performers took their stand, and alternated in playing, so that each could rest, and yet the music never ceased. It was very natural that the Terrace should thus become a regular lounge for Sunday afternoon, and masters and boys, inhabitants of Eton as well as Windsor, flocked to it as the most frequented promenade.

"What a lot of people there are," said Mason.

"Let's do like everybody else, and take up our stand near the music for a bit."

"All right, but we mustn't go on the grass."

"Look here, here's Crossley and Lovell coming.. Look at Lovell's gloves."

"What are you doing here?" said the latter, as he came up to us.

"Much the same as you ; showing ourselves."

"Well, I'm tired of it," said he ; "there are no very interesting people about, and I shall go soon. Come on, Crossley."

And they passed on. Mason and I stayed where we were for the present, but soon afterwards began to move about among the crowd in order to see our acquaintances. At last, however, finding that there were not very many of them, we made up our minds to go back to college, and so left the scene of music and kid gloves to descend the hundred steps which we had found so tiresome to mount.

"By this day next week," I said, "we shall have won our race."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Why, our race with Radley, of course."

"Oh, yes, at Henley. It's almost a dead certainty; we must win. But all the same, you know," he added, "I think it was foolish of us ever to accept their challenge. We might perfectly have declined it, and told them they were too insignificant. But now we have begun it, it will have to go on every year."

"Yes, I see what you mean; we've nothing to gain and everything to lose."

"That's just it. . It does us no credit beating them, and if by any chance they won, we should be frightfully disgraced."

"Oh, but they won't win."

"I don't think they can," replied Mason, "but we shall see."

There was a good deal of excitement in the school generally about this race. Since the contest with Westminster had been done away with, our eight had no annual struggle whatever to stimulate them to exertion. Radley, however, had challenged us this year, and though many of the Eton multitude had never heard of the place before, it was determined to accept the defiance. The next question was where it was to be rowed, and after some consultation Henley was agreed upon, and the time fixed to be the day after the regatta, which would take place there in the middle of June.

How the school was to see it was another thing which perplexed the authorities. But considering that it would not be on one of the actual days of the regatta itself, it

was at last settled with unparalleled magnanimity that every one should be allowed to go, and that a special train should convey the boys from Eton thither.

This was made known to us formally, together with the time at which we were to start, on the day before the race. We were all of us to be ready the next day after three o'clock school, and meet at the Great Western Station. There was no fear that any of us would fail to be there, and accordingly the moment school was over we rushed up to secure our places in the train.

The eight had gone off earlier, in order that they might not be hurried, but have every advantage of peace and quiet preparatory to the race. But as the great event was not to come off till late in the evening, half-past four or five was judged to be amply sufficient time for the departure of those who were to be only spectators.

"Here we are again," said a voice behind me as I came on to the platform, and turning round I saw it was Mason.

"Look here," he said ; "come with Lovell and me and let's all get into a carriage together."

"By all means," I answered, "but there are no carriages."

"Oh, but there will be soon ; let's stick together."

We waited, and as the carriages came up seized upon one of them. Others of course invaded it besides ourselves, but we three were together at one end, and our companions were by no means disagreeable ones. One of them was the little fellow Rowley, who had just got into the boats this half, another was from the same tutor's, and rejoiced in the name of Craft.

"It's a great bore getting to Henley," said Lovell, as

he subsided into one corner. "But I suppose one ought to go."

"Only you wish it wasn't so much trouble," put in Mason.

"I think that makes half the fun of it. There's some excitement in getting off, and getting away from Eton."

"That's just what I don't like," observed Lovell. "I'd rather stay quiet at home."

"I suppose you won't run with them then?" said Mason, inquiringly.

"No, I shall just walk a little bit of the way, so as to see them come in well."

"But if you don't get as far as the Poplars, you won't see much."

"Well, I shall think what to do when I get there."

"I'm not going to run, I tell you," said I; "so probably you and I will stick together."

"All right: I hope so."

The station which we got out at was close to the river, and it took us a very short time to get into the main street, and then over the bridge and down on to the river bank. The two crews had not come on to the water yet, for it was barely half-past five, and the race was not to be rowed before six, so we all of us loitered about on the bank, and surveyed the course until they came.

"I don't know where their boat is, or where they come from," I said to Parker, as we walked along by the river.

"Oh, they've got some place down by the bridge there. Don't you see there where the little flag is flying?"

"I see, is that it?"

"Yes, that's where they'll come from."

"It's certainly a beautiful part of the river for a race,

I remarked ; "that long reach out there is a glorious bit. And then you know the trees, and the look of the whole country, and the bridge too, coming in at the end, make it altogether one of the prettiest bits on the river."

"Oh, yes, there's no doubt that the Henley scenery is nearly the best on the Thames ; but looking at it simply as a course for a race, it is rather spoilt by that sharp turn above the Poplars."

"Well, I suppose it is ; it gives the inside boat an immense advantage."

Thus we loitered on, discussing things in general, and pausing at various intervals as we came upon different groups of our friends. An hour always passes slowly to those who are waiting eagerly for its end ; but at length the shadows perceptibly increased, the sun began almost to sink behind the trees, and what gave surer information still, a reference to our watches told us that the time appointed was at hand. As it drew near a general settling seemed to take place among those on the bank. Instead of pacing uneasily up and down, they all began to congregate together near the shore, so as to make a line along the bank, and be able from that position to criticise the various crews.

Before however the boats appeared, our ranks received an unexpected addition of spectators. The Radley boys came down like ourselves to see the race. There were of course not nearly so many of them as there were Etonians, and indeed they might have been altogether overlooked in the crowd, had not the red rosette which they all wore proclaimed them to be none of us. We turned to look upon them as they came by, and they turned to look at us ; and no doubt in the spirit of school-

boy rivalry neither of us thought very much of the other. But our attention was soon taken up by the two eights as they came out from their place of shelter, and rowed past the admiring crowds. Eton of course received the most cheering, because there were so many more lungs to contribute to it ; and to myself as well as to all the rest of us, they certainly appeared to be the neatest crew. There was more finish and regularity about the stroke than there was among our opponents ; and when besides this we knew that we had the advantage of two or three stone in weight, the result seemed almost certain to be in our favour.

Nearly everybody went down with them to the start, intending to run along the bank with the race. But Lovell and I remained faithful to each other and to our original intention, and only walked on a little way in the direction by which they were to come.

“ Those fellows who run all the way,” he observed, “ won’t see the finish. Even if they are up at the end, they’ll be too much done to make their way through the crowd.”

“ I am quite clear,” I said, “ that we’ve done the right thing. We shall see quite enough of them coming on, if we get as far as the Poplars.”

“ I should think so. But look here, I believe they’re off.”

“ Yes, I hear the shouting ; but I can’t make them out yet.”

“ There they are,” he said, after a few moments’ pause. “ There, you can see them ; and what’s more, I see the light blue oars on the outside.”

“ Then they’ve got this Berkshire side, and get the advantage of the turn. What a bore !”

"Never mind," he said, "we shall be all right ; we'll take their water before that."

"I'll tell you what, we must keep up here so as to see them. Eton are ahead now, I can make that out."

"I don't know that," he said, "they look almost level."

"Here they come now," I cried. "Now we shall see them." As they came on towards us, we could see that Eton was putting on a violent spurt, in hopes probably of being able to take the Radley water, as we had prophesied, and so get the advantage at the fatal corner.

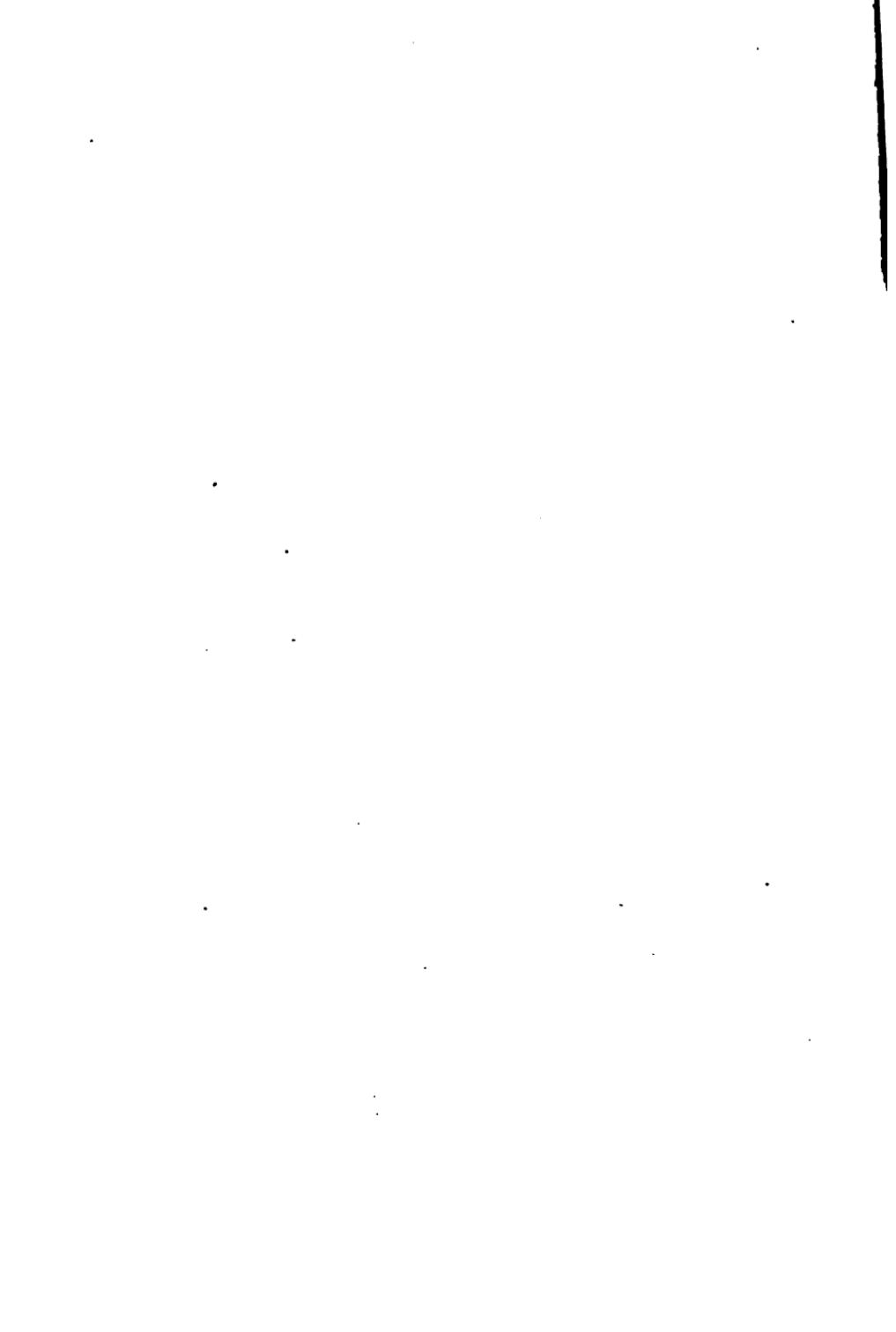
"Now we must run on," said Lovell. "Come on before the crowd."

Boats, runners, and ourselves all left the Poplars behind, and tore on, eager to see how the spurt would carry the blue oars forward. Shouts of "Well rowed, Eton !" mixed with fainter ones of "Now then, Radley !" attested the interest which was taken in the contest. The uproar became louder and louder as each boat seemed to increase or lessen its distance. Eton rowed most manfully ; but the attempt to take the Berkshire side was rather too much for it, and Radley kept her advantage, and came round the corner and up to us hand over hand.

There was no longer a certainty of our winning, the chances seemed growing less and less, and the despairing shouts and exhortations from the bank told that some of us foresaw the possibility of our disgrace. Radley drew on, with every appearance of passing us, but the spirits of our own crew were so stirred at the prospect, that they strained every nerve to keep their position. The red oars came up, but never quite got level ; the appearance of success was fortunately but temporary, still the danger was by no means over. Both at last put



ON THE BANK.



on the final spurt ; the powers of Eton then told, and as they came past the post the blue oars were the winners by three-quarters of a length.

“ That was unpleasantly near,” said Mason, as soon as the cheers and shouting had subsided.

“ Yes, that it was,” I answered. “ I’m sure they can’t have such an eight every year.”

“ No, I heard that it was because it was a better one than usual that they had sent the challenge.”

“ Well, now we must go and give them an ovation as they come on to the bridge.”

“ What’s to be done after that ?” he asked.

“ I don’t know, we’ll see what they do.”

“ Where are you going to ?” said Lovell, as he joined us.

“ On to the bridge, that’s all. Come along.”

A crowd had assembled, but it was some time before the heroes of the day made their appearance. When at length they did present themselves, the storm of cheers that greeted them was such as Henley had never before in all probability heard. A hoisting took place at once, as if we had been in the midst of Eton, and the whole crowd moved in a body up the town.

“ Where are they going to ?” asked Parker.

“ Why, to the inn, you know. It’s the Catherine Wheel, some way up the street.”

“ And what’s going to happen ?”

“ Why, both crews will get drunk, I should think. No,” I added, “ I don’t mean that ; but they’ll go out of training, and have a sort of dinner.”

The sort of hero worship which boys always show prompted the whole school to follow their eight as far as

the inn, and then to congregate outside it in a sort of way that showed the highest veneration for those who were within. The Captain of the Boats was looked upon as a perfect sovereign by his assembled subjects, especially after the triumph he had gained ; and all waited for his appearance at the window with an eagerness that would hardly have been shown for royalty. At last he appeared, and made a sort of speech from the balcony, which reminded one forcibly of a Windsor election. Not that the topics were the same, for it was a sort of short eulogy on boating in general and these two crews in particular, but the hotel window and the crowd outside looked uncommonly parliamentary. After this was over, and the cheers for both eights had subsided, our crowd dispersed ; most of us to seek some refreshment in the inns until the time came for our return to Windsor.

CHAPTER XI.

ETON *v.* HARROW.

"To a level ground they came, and there
They drove the wickets in."

Hood.

" **I** WONDER what will have happened by this time to-morrow," said Pryor, as we came up-stairs after absence at lock-up. " What do you suppose will be the state of things ?"

" Rather bad, I'm afraid," was my answer ; " they must have a better eleven than we have."

" I don't know that, we don't despair ourselves."

" No, I should hope not ; you wouldn't get many runs if you made up your minds to be beaten."

" I know," he continued, " the chances are against us ; they've always beaten us lately, but we may do something yet."

" I'm sure I hope so. You'll be off, I suppose, by nine o'clock."

" Yes," he answered, " but we shan't begin much before twelve. So you'll see pretty nearly all of it."

What we were thus talking of was one of the greatest events in the whole year—more exciting than the 4th of June, which after all was but a sort of ceremony—and the only real occasion when we were matched with a

school equalling our own in importance. The annual cricket match with Harrow was looked upon as the greatest trial of strength which Eton was ever called upon to make. This it owed partly to the antiquity of its institution, having been carried on almost uninterruptedly for the last fifty years ; partly to the admiration felt for the game itself ; and partly also to the fact that there was no aquatic contest which could divide the interest with its landed rival. For many years there had been no race at all ; that with Radley had only just been taken up, and even in this no honour could be gained ; so the whole school looked to the cricket field to support its name in the eyes of the general world, and to show that it could make a good fight, not only against its inferiors, but also with its equals.

Another great reason why the Eton and Harrow match should engage so much of our attention and interest, was to be found in the sort of public character with which it was invested. It was too important to be confined to Eton alone ; it must take place in London, and there be attended by all the rank and fashion whom the season could produce. And though this, of course, could not have been the cause of its importance in the first instance, since it was really only one of the results, still the lapse of time had changed the view which might be taken of it, and from having merely been one of the effects of great popularity, it had really come to be regarded as one of the causes of it.

Pryor was naturally interested as to how the match would go off. Being one of the players, he felt, of course, that the honour of the school was in his hands, and had he been a little less careless as to things in general, he

might even have been somewhat nervous as to how he should acquit himself. But the fact was, that he did not trouble himself too much about the matter ; he hoped we should win, and would do his best to contribute to it, but he had no idea of pondering over chances and fretting on uncertain prospects. By such conduct many people would lose heart, while he himself determined to be free from all care or nervousness as to the enemy. Fear for the result never troubled his mind ; he knew it was more than doubtful, but still the happy indifference of his nature prevented his ever showing any of that deep anxiety which so few others could hide.

"It will be a great bore though, if they beat us," he said. "That will make four years running."

"Upon my word, you must make an awful lot of runs."

"Which of course I shall do," he replied. "Everybody can do it by wishing, can't they?"

"Well, but you can try, at all events."

"So I shall. I don't suppose anybody would let the ball get into their wickets if they could help it."

"Well, I shouldn't like to have to play at Lord's," I continued.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Why, because of that frightful crowd there always is. I couldn't do anything before such a multitude."

"Oh, that's all nonsense. You forget all about them in the excitement of playing. I don't mind it a bit."

"Well, but the first time you went on to the ground you must have felt nervous."

"A little perhaps, but very little. The great thing is to have a supreme contempt for everybody except yourself."

“ Well, mind you have it to-morrow. I think you are pretty sure.”

The morrow came, and as soon as eleven o’clock school was over, all those who had got leave hurried to their houses in order to prepare for their departure to London. Black ties were exchanged for rainbow-coloured ones, while the white footman-like chokers of the bigger boys made way for the scarf and pia of ordinary life. Then the street became thronged, and all was bustle and eagerness to reach the station.

The move to town, though very general, was not so universal as the one which always took place on the second day of the match. Then both masters and boys went up to see the play, and those unfortunate individuals who had no friends in town to get leave for them, had most of them the opportunity of getting away under the shelter of their tutor’s wing. Luckily for me there was no difficulty about my own leave, my relations could manage all that for me ; and so when I arrived at Paddington at about one o’clock, I drove at once to report myself at home, intending as soon as luncheon was over to proceed up towards Lord’s cricket ground.

Cabs were driving up Baker Street that afternoon in far greater profusion than usual. “ Hansoms ” were seen crowded sometimes with as many as three or four occupants, thus bearing the smaller boys towards St. John’s Wood. Carriages too there were of every description, from the proudest old coach down to the humblest job brougham ; and the laughing faces of those in them, joined to the presence of some little fellow with a blue riband at the buttonhole, told that they were intending spectators of the match. On we all went, my own cab

swelling the number; then we skirted the Regent's Park, leaving it to our right; and eventually turning off to the left, we came in sight of a crowd of carriages and flags flying, which proclaimed the entrance to the public ground.

It would have been tedious to attempt to make one's way in a carriage up to the very door, so I jumped out as soon as we had reached the outskirts of the throng, and got in much quicker than I should otherwise have done. A stream of boys was pouring in through the little wicket, each paying his sixpence as he passed the counter. None of them, however, were immediate acquaintances of my own, though I recognized many of the faces by sight; so I pushed on, to seek among the ring of spectators for some friend who would enlighten me as to what had been going on, and what the present state of the game was.

The whole circuit of the ground was crowded in a way that attested the interest taken in the match. The centre was of course left open for the players, but round them, though at a respectful distance, a dense ring was formed, which consisted of all the boys and men and even fairer visitors of either party who chose to watch the proceedings on foot. Many of the smaller boys, and of those who disdained the care of their trousers or of their dignity, had found a resting-place on the grass, and were lolling in all attitudes, half lying and half sitting, at the feet of their more elevated neighbours. But the generality, it must be confessed, were averse to a recumbent position, and stood determinately upright, so-lacing their muscles by an occasional change of position, or by a faint attempt for some short distance to thread the crowd that was around them. These formed a sort

of dark ground tier, above which rose another circle more diversified in form and colour than the monotonous collection of black coats which was below them. Behind the pedestrians came the rows of carriages, which served as resting-places and also as convenient eminences from which the weaker portion of the spectators could survey the field. Bonnets and gay dresses lent colour and animation to the scene ; and numberless were the groups which hovered round the fair occupants of the various equipages, thus helping by their presence to relieve the monotony of an unbroken line.

The ground itself without its garnishing of players and their admirers was decidedly anything but picturesque. All the traces of a suburban district were to be seen around it. The brick walls that enclosed it, the semi-detached and cockney villas that overlooked it, all told of its neighbourhood to the great metropolis ; and it required some stretch of imagination to believe that this was the field, and these the buildings, which were known in poetical phrase as the shady groves of the evangelist. Its own extent had been somewhat encroached upon by the erection of a tennis court and billiard room, which took off a long strip from the side nearest the entrance ; but as this had been done by the proprietors themselves it could hardly be complained of, and moreover it was the only building of any sort within the enclosure, if we except the pavilion and its rows of benches, which were certainly an improvement, both to the convenience and to the appearance of the whole place.

Every match which had taken place since I first went to Eton had seen me on the ground as a spectator of it. I was well acquainted therefore with the general appear-

ance, and hardly paused as I entered except to scrutinise the crowd, and see where there was a chance of finding a good place and at the same time a friend to talk to. Both were soon discovered; a space between two carriages let me into the ring, and I found myself by the side of Darrell and another of my tutor's fellows who was standing with him.

"Hallo! have you just come?" he asked.

"Yes, just this minute," I answered. "How is the match going?"

"Better than I expected; we got ninety-one first innings."

"What! do you mean to say we've been in?"

"Yes, of course I do," he said; "and we're all out again too. But we got ninety-one."

"And what have they got?"

"Oh, they've not been in very long, but there are three wickets down for twenty-five, so it's not so bad, is it?"

"No, perhaps not," I said, "if they stick to the same rate. But look there," as one of the Harrovians made a tremendous drive, "these two will run it up a bit."

"I don't know; see how well it was fielded; he only got two."

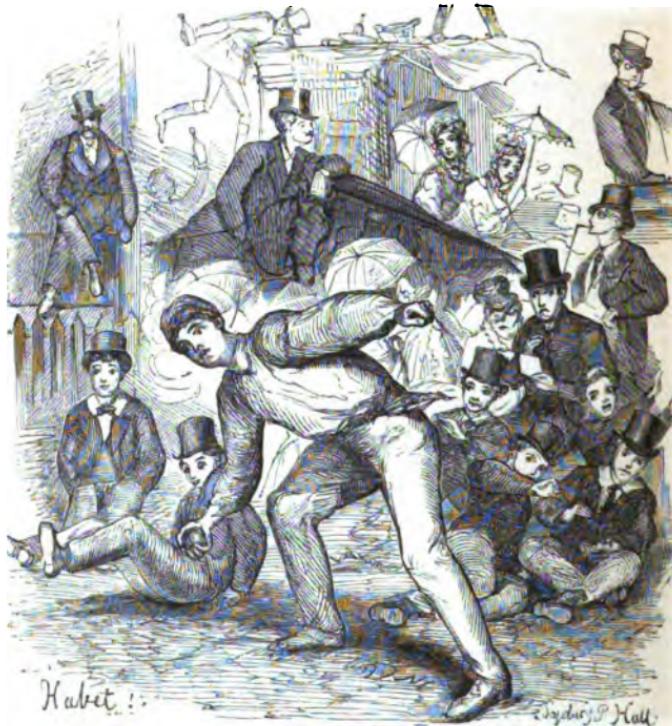
And then cheers arose from the Etonians at the success of their fielding, and counter-cheers again from the Harrovians at their own success in batting; until both sides prolonged it merely from a sort of emulation of each other, not in any degree for the sake of the honour of their champion, whose further performances they probably marred by the tumult thus excited.

"I'll tell you what," said Darrell, "that little fellow plays uncommonly well."

"Much too well for us," was my answer; "who is he?"

"I don't know exactly, I can't quite make him out. I think his name must be Richards, but we'll go and find out at the pavilion presently."

"There goes another," I said, as the ball rose up



into the air, and then when it fell ran along the ground, until it actually reached the spectators' feet.

"Yes, but that was a bit of a spoon. He'll be out direct^{ly} if he does that again."

"He knows it too ; look how steady they are playing now."

"That's it, just give a pat to each ball," said Darrell, as if he was really speaking to the batsmen.

"How well Pryor is bowling," I continued. "Every single ball now is on the wicket."

"Yes, I expect he didn't like being put about in the way he was before, and is trying to make up for it."

"Perhaps."

The match, which had really been rather lively just as I began to look on at it, now became somewhat less interesting. Runs were got slowly, and even then only one at a time. This of course was a gain for us, since it prevented the score of our opponents from mounting up very rapidly. But it also took away from the excitement of the spectators ; there was none of that rapid and free hitting which gives life to a game ; and so we became tempted to wish that if it were possible the two things might be combined, and quick run-getting and slow scoring no longer continue so incompatible as the rules of cricket had made them.

"It is rather slow," I said, "isn't it ?" as we watched some few more of those 'pats' which had received Darrell's commendation.

"It is just now," he answered ; "but I bet you we shall see that spooning fellow caught in a minute. His bat is longing to send the ball up into the air."

"Then I hope it will do so at once. But don't let's stay here any longer ; let's move on towards the pavilion."

"Oh, wait till this fellow is out ; he'll be caught in a minute, and then we'll go."

"Meanwhile their score is getting up, isn't it ?"

"No, not very much," he answered. "Beyond those first two or three hits, they've not done very much. It's about thirty-five, I should think."

"Well, there goes another," I said, as the ball was lifted into the air.

"Out, for a pound!" shouted Darrell, in the liveliest state of excitement, for he saw what I had not done as I spoke, that it was just going to fall into one of our field's hands. "Out, I bet any money. Hurrah!" he added. "Well caught, Lewis; hurrah!" for the ball was held before it reached the ground, and another little toss into the air proclaimed that it had been a fair catch. The whole ring now shouted with us, and Darrell's excitement was met by the cries of hundreds of voices, who all joined in the general rejoicing at the discomfiture of one of our enemies.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" I shouted myself, as our spooning friend retired towards the pavilion, and we all of us began to think that the prospect was after all not so hopeless as it had once appeared.

"I told you so," said Darrell, as soon as the noise subsided, and he himself recovered breath. "I told you he'd be out in a minute."

"Well, now we'll move on to the pavilion."

"All right then, come along."

"I hate standing in one place," I remarked, as we proceeded to make our way through the crowd; "one never sees any of the fellows who are here."

"No, but one sees the match, which one can't do half so well when wandering about."

"Well, but I must say I like to see my friends. There are all sorts of people here whom one never sees at any

other time; fellows who have left Eton, you know, and whom one is glad to see again."

"Oh, yes, I think so too," he answered. "I think one ought to move about a little."

Our progress was slow as we attempted to walk round among the circle of spectators. A tiny space like a narrow footpath was supposed to be left between the ring formed by those on foot and the carriages behind them; but this was so often interrupted by crowds at particular points, by friends meeting, or by those in advance of us stopping to talk at the door of some carriage, that it really might almost as well not have existed at all. We had to be perpetually slipping in between ladies' crinolines, under horses' heads, and round at the back of carriages; so that altogether we found it quite true, that while thus wandering about we could see nothing of the match. Every now and then we popped upon our friends, or came suddenly face to face with some one who was recognized as an old acquaintance; then a pause followed, and in our turn we thus became one of the many causes of interruption which prevented the free circling of the restless portions of the crowd.

As we were thus slowly moving onwards, a burst of cheers rose around us on a sudden, which made us stop at once, and eagerly attempt to look over the shoulders of those in front of us. The applause which followed a good hit or a brilliant piece of fielding had often before this attracted us to its contemplation, but now the shouting was more general and more animated than could be accounted for by any supposition save the fall of another wicket.

"It's Richards at last," cried Darrell, as he jumped up

and looked over the heads which intervened between us and the wickets.

“What, bowled?” I asked, as I vainly attempted to get a peep on to the ground. “Oh, yes,” I continued, as he never answered, and I saw for myself that it was so. “Middle stump; look at it, knocked right out of the ground.”

“Yes, how was that?” asked Darrell of a neighbour. “What sort of ball was it?”

“A regular shooter,” was the answer; “pitched right in front of the wicket, but too far forward for him, and then shot right under his bat.”

“Hurrah! well bowled, Linwood! He’s really bowling awfully well, isn’t he? That’s the second wicket he’s got.”

The discomfited player returned to the pavilion, where he was received with the usual cheers of his party in reward for his innings. We proceeded to follow his example, and continued our course in the same direction, but it is needless to say were not received in the same public manner as he had been. Still we ascended the balcony, and found that our elevated position was by far the best place for seeing what was going on. Besides this we were actually in the head-quarters of both elevens, so could hear the plans discussed, and ascertain how the authorities thought the game would go.

The wickets fell more rapidly towards the conclusion of the innings than they had done at the beginning. The fourth had been lowered for thirty-nine, the fifth not till sixty-two. We then began to lose the little bit of confidence which had once entered our hearts, and visions rose before us of an innings of at least one hundred and thirty.

But such fears proved fortunately premature. A change of bowling was tried, and the new proficient handled the ball so well, that he disposed of two of his enemies in one over. Immense cheering followed as a matter of course, and the striped caps near us in the pavilion were hardly so confident as at the first. But still there were only eight wickets down, and Harrow was within seven of our own score.

“Who’ll bet they are out under the hundred?” cried some one below.

“Why, they are sure to get it,” was the answer; “these three last fellows are all good bats. They’ll get a hundred and ten.”

“I bet you they don’t.”

“I bet you they do;” and the particulars of the transaction were immediately placed on record.

But our good fortune favoured us again. They headed us it is true, but only by very little; and when the last wicket fell for ninety-six, the cheers rose from all parts of the ground. Both sides were gratified; one at having proved their superiority in the first division of the contest, the others at having been beaten by so little.

The moment the players left the ground, everybody seemed to consider it incumbent on them to pour over it in an instant, and examine the actual spots where the wickets had been pitched. It certainly was a relief to get away from the crowd of men and horses, and have an open space on which one could walk about at will, without positively elbowing people on every side of one; but still even here we had enough of the throng about us, and as we looked upon the numbers perambulating on the grass, and the double row of carriages which extended

all round the ring, we could easily believe the assertion that there were at least eight or ten thousand spectators present.

The bell rang to clear the ground as soon as a decent interval had elapsed for the refreshment of the players. The telegraph was cleared of its numbers ; no longer ninety-six for ten wickets was seen there, but a vacant space remained, waiting till a new score should have attained sufficient importance to be placed on it, and gradually the crowd dispersed as the players came forward, in the same way as an ordinary race-course is cleared before the appearance of the competitors.

Two of our steadiest fellows were now going in, Langton and Williams. They were what some people might have called "sticks," playing a stiff defensive game, instead of being free and open hitters. Their part was not intended to be a very brilliant one, but it was hoped that it might at all events prove to be a useful one. They would make a sort of sturdy opposition to the bowling at the outset, and while they thus fatigued their adversaries, would be preparing an easier task for their own successors at the wickets.

"It'll be rather slow though, at first," remarked Darrell, who was still with me ; "they won't get many runs."

"No, but if they only stop the balls, that'll do. It'll tire the bowlers, which is what we want."

"Well, now, they've just called 'play.' Let's see how they begin."

The first ball was carefully put aside by Langton, who seemed, however, to warm a little towards the second. But he was too cautious to run for it ; and he waited till

he had really a good opportunity, at the last ball of the over, of preventing its being a maiden.

"I dare say they'll do," said my companion, "but I shan't have time to see much more of it. I've got to get home early."

"When are the stumps drawn?" I asked.

"Not till seven, and I can't stay so long as that. In fact, I think I must be off now. You'll be here again in the morning, I suppose?"

"Yes, but don't go off now. I'll come myself in a minute."

"I must really, I think; it'll take me some time getting even to the gate from here."

"Well, I must stay a little longer, just to see how things go on."

It was not very long, however, before I followed his example. Our two men still remained at the wicket, and were judiciously accommodating themselves to the peculiarities of each bowler. It was therefore with some feeling of hope still left in me that I retired, and carried the news home that we were still making a good fight of it. Everybody seemed to appreciate the importance of a long score in this last innings; and even the smallest Harrovians as I passed them were venting their imprecations against the fellows who so steadily resisted their arms.

When I took up the paper next morning at the breakfast table, I saw that we had indeed done far better than most of us had expected, and that our second innings was at all events likely to exceed the first in the number of runs which we should obtain. Langton and Williams must both of them have remained in for some time, since even

with their slow rate of scoring they had accumulated twenty and twelve respectively. Others had followed them, but they also had given us a large contribution ; and so it was recorded that when the stumps were drawn at seven o'clock there were only three wickets down for seventy-two runs.

This was certainly much more than any of us had expected we should make ; and foreseeing that the match could not possibly be over till quite late in the evening, even if it was finished then, I was in no hurry to go up to the ground, but occupied the morning in doing various little things about town, and then at about three o'clock drove up in a hansom as before to St John's Wood.

The crowd was, if possible, greater than before ; carriages were more numerous and boys also, for both schools had been more liberally treated with respect to leave for this last day. It was strange also to see some of the attendant satellites of each school congregating near the little beershop by the gate. One of the first faces that caught my notice as I came in was that of our chief dignitary of the Wall, who was standing near, without his tin can for a wonder, but with the same calm and imperturbable smile upon his rosy face.

“ Hallo, Spankey ! are you here ?” was my greeting as we met.

“ Yes, sir, to be sure, sir ; never miss a match at Lord's, sir ; never, sir.”

“ And how is the match going ?”

“ Well, sir, they'll have hard work to finish it, sir. We are just all out for two hundred and forty-eight, sir ; and Mr. Thompson, sir, he made seventy-two, sir.”

"Did he really? Oh, I must go up to the pavilion and hear all about it."

Pryor was standing outside as I came up, so I at once made up my mind to find out everything from him, since he had been one of the players.

"I got sixteen," he answered, in reply to my question as to how many he had made. "Thompson's was a splendid innings," he added.

"Seventy-two, wasn't it?"

"Yes, and only one chance. It may be a drawn match, you know, after all. There's not very much time left."

"What's going to happen when they go in?" I asked.

"I don't know yet exactly, but I believe I'm to go on at one end, and perhaps Morton at the other. But they talk of trying slows."

"Is that a good thing? surely not."

"I don't think so," answered Pryor. "Eton fellows can't play them, but that's no reason why others who get more practice shouldn't be able to."

"Well, there goes the bell; they don't give you much time."

"No; they know they've got a good deal to do before seven o'clock."

There was almost as much caution displayed in the opening of the Harrow innings as there had been in our own. They knew that they had two hundred and forty-four runs to get, if they were to beat us; and our unexpected score had taken them rather by surprise, and damped their spirits. But then against this was to be placed the short time in which they had to make the runs, and they saw that their care must be combined as much as possible with rapidity in scoring. After the

first few overs runs began to be got more quickly, and to our dismay we saw change after change on the telegraph, and still not one wicket had fallen.

“What’s to be done?” said a voice all of a sudden at my elbow; and turning round I saw two or three fellows who had left Eton, and among whom was Martin, my old companion at my dame’s.

“How are you?” “I’m so glad you’re here,” were our first greetings; but we soon turned to the discussion of the match we had come to witness.

“It looks bad, doesn’t it?” I said. “They’re going too fast for us.”

“But I don’t really think they can do it; there’s not time.”

“Well, I hope not,” said Martin. “But look now, our fellows have got a consultation; they are going to make some change.”

“That’s for slows, I bet any money,” was my remark as I saw what was going on.

The supposition proved to be correct. Pryor still remained at his end, but the opposite one was taken by Marshall, who happened to be the only Colleger in the eleven, and also the only one of the lot who could bowl underhand. The change was an effective one. The very first ball was run out to, and the player narrowly escaped being stumped while out of his ground, while the second was still more fruitful in its results. It rose into the air, but only to be sent back into the bowler’s hands, and Harrow mourned her earliest fall.

“That’s the way to do things,” said Martin, as the cheers subsided, and the telegraph showed one wicket down for thirty-five runs.

"I believe we shall beat them," I said; for we began not to be satisfied now with the prospect of a drawn match, but hoped even to be able to claim a victory.

But our good fortune did not continue. The next fellow who went in had evidently no idea of letting the balls off, and they began to fly all over the field, and give ample exercise to our eleven. Still the slows were continued, for it was hoped, that a return of their early success would take place, but meanwhile the score went on increasing almost faster than it had done before.

"They ought to take him off at once," was the remark on every side.

"The fields are much too close in," said some one else. "Whenever a ball is hit, and it goes past them, it is good for two or three."

"Oh, it's nonsense," observed Martin, "going on in that way. Come along and take a turn; we won't stay and look at it."

We left the pavilion and mixed among the crowd that formed the ring, and as we found numberless friends to talk to began to pay less attention to the match. We were aware, however, that the slows were soon abandoned, and that within the next half-hour two more wickets had fallen; but it was still only five o'clock, and they had two more hours before them in which to get one hundred and forty runs.

It became tremendously exciting as the end drew near; it was impossible for me to tear myself away as I had done yesterday before the stumps were drawn. Even at the last, when they had to get fifty runs in less than half an hour, and when all saw that the match could

not possibly be decided, still the desire of seeing all definitely settled kept me on the ground. Minute after minute flew by ; the Harrovians did their best to score at every single chance, but there was too much to be done. The watches of the spectators, now so frequently consulted, told that the struggle was hopeless ; and when the umpires declared the game was at end, there were still twenty-six runs to get and two wickets to go down.

Every Etonian seemed to go mad with delight ; there was so much triumph in the mere fact of not being beaten after the defeats of three successive years. Linwood, the Captain of our eleven, was hoisted on the ground, and the Harrow multitudes beheld for the first time what must have appeared to them a most frantic proceeding. The enthusiasm communicated itself to the road outside, and for long distances might be traced the triumphant faces, both in carriages and on foot, which bore to almost every district of London the news of our success.

Thus ended the great match of the year. It stimulated Eton, as I believe, to further exertions ; and since that day she has been able not only to secure a draw, but also a conquest over her too fortunate rival.

CHAPTER XII.

SWEEPSTAKES.

“Un navire en cet équipage
Non loin d’Athènes fit naufrage.”

La Fontaine.

“Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered.”

Cymbeline.

WE all of us came back to Eton in a state of elation, which was really pardonable; and for some time the one topic of conversation for the whole school was the match at Lord’s, and the various incidents which had taken place there. Gradually, however, other subjects took their place, and we were not long, at my dame’s at all events, in finding new materials for speculation.

It was almost the middle of July when the match was played, and the summer half was consequently drawing to a close, for Election Saturday had been fixed for the 28th. But there was one thing, of the highest importance to those in our house, which had not yet taken place. This was the annual sweepstakes, which was always so full of confusion and amusement as to be looked forward to by all of us with the greatest eagerness. Every one who had passed was obliged to start in it, or else submit to pay a fine of half a crown; and all the boats were to

be of the common "tub" description, so that every one should be as nearly like his neighbour as possible.

Of course it would never have done to have allowed any pair who chose to start together. The two best oars would invariably have walked over the course, and all the rest of the house would have been deprived of the smallest chance of doing anything. The remedy for this lay in drawing lots to ascertain who should be together. Our whole number was accordingly separated into two divisions ; one consisting of those who were best qualified to be strokes, the other of those who were to row as bows. Then the names, after they had been shaken together in two different hats, were drawn alternately, and the two that came out together became in each case one of the pairs who were to contend in the sweepstakes.

In this way no one could tell with whom he would have to row ; and it became quite a chance whether even the best oar would be able to distinguish himself. Sometimes perhaps one of the eight would be drawn with some little fellow who had only just passed, and never had an oar in his hand. The result in such a case would at least be doubtful, for the boat would be sure to be pulled round at every stroke, and the steerage would have to be perpetually acting in favour of the weaker oar, and so creating a heavy drag on the boat. Then perhaps even a good pair might have their chance spoilt by getting into the last row, and so having to force their way through the crowd in front of them. Altogether the result was made as uncertain as possible ; and all one could say was, that if there was a tolerably even-matched bow and stroke, neither of whom would pull the other

round, and they were in the first or second row, then their chance of winning was by no means a bad one.

"It's just that," said Trevor, as we stood discussing probabilities. "It's not the best stroke that wins, it's more likely to be the best bow, if he has not got a stroke that is too good for him."

"Yes," I answered. "Fellows who are good oars themselves don't make much allowance for others; and a stroke always goes on rowing as hard as he can, without thinking that he is damaging his own chance by it."

"You want a fellow who will row quietly, and not distress his bow; for there are very few who could pull a boat along entirely by themselves after the bow was shut up."

"I'll tell you, you know, whom I think the best pair."

"Well, who?" he asked.

"Why, these two," I said, pointing with my finger to the paper where they were all drawn out, and which was now fixed on the passage wall under the gas-lamp.

"What, Sutton and Drake?"

"Yes; they are both very equal. Drake is a capital bow, and Sutton isn't positively bad, you know."

"No, that's true," he said. "But look at these others in the first row. What do you think of them?"

"Rogers, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I don't think he's bad, either," I said; "but Parkinson is sure to shut up. He hasn't the strength of a cat in him."

"I don't know that," replied Trevor. "They've got the advantage of first row, you know."

"So they have; but I'll back Sutton against them."

"Well," he said, "I wish you or I had got a decent bow, and then we might beat both."

"I shall beat you, as it is, anyhow," I said, laughing.

"I dare say you will, for I've a great mind not to start at all."

"Oh, why? you must start."

"It's absurd my starting. Smith has never been out in a boat."

"No more have lots of the fellows who'll start. You take him down to the river, and coach him well for the next two or three days, and then see if you can't get on."

"Well, I shall think about it."

His thoughts, after they had been sufficiently digested, impelled him to take the chance at all events of what he could do. The unlucky bow was taken down every after twelve, and made to practise before the eventful day; all which labour was thoroughly distasteful to him, for being one of the aspiring young cricketers of the house, or in other words a regular "dry bob," he had an intense horror of the river, and would willingly have paid his half-crown to be allowed to enjoy his days in Sixpenny. But Trevor, as his superior, determined all this for him; and though he knew that there was hardly a chance of his coming in anywhere, still he thought it was supporting his own credit as a member of the Boats not to allow his partner or himself to be idle; and so made up his mind to start at all events with the race, even though he should not keep up with it.

I had been rather more fortunate myself in the companion who had been drawn with me. My bow was not a good oar, but he knew at all events how to keep stroke and to feather, which was much more than Trevor's friend

did. His name was Walters, and this was the second year he had started in my dame's sweepstakes ; so he was not a novice to whom everything would have to be explained, but had some notions of his own how to get through a crush, and how to defend himself from any malicious attacks which might be made upon our boat. Others, however, were far stronger than we were ; but still, though we hardly thought of being within the first three, yet we made up our minds at once to start, and went down day after day to the river in order to practise a little together.

The drawing had taken place ten days before the sweepstakes themselves were to come off. This gave us all a little time to look about us, and see how we should get on with each other. And there was another important thing to be attended to. All of us had to provide ourselves with steerers, and these were to be looked for beyond the limits of our own house ; for since every one at my dame's was expected to row, and since the sweepstakes were specially to promote the active exertions, no one was allowed merely to sit still instead of working at the oar. In consequence of this all the celebrated steerers of other houses were invoked, but the best of them would often refuse to come if the person who asked them had not much chance of winning. It was not worth while displaying any talent in a bad cause, and so eventually perhaps any small boy that could be got took the strings. It was different when a boat had the chance of winning. Then even the steerer of the eight would take them under his guidance ; for though no prize was positively offered to him, still the liberality of those who were the gainers never let him go

without some reward for his assistance towards their success.

A little fellow called Vesey, who was at my tutor's, had promised to take charge of Walters and myself. We were a very moderate crew, and we therefore got only a moderate steerer ; but still he proved of great use to us, both on the day itself and also in coaching us preparatory to it. Many were the occasions on which all three of us went down to the river and took a good "bucket," in order to get ourselves into training ; and at these times he was always with us, and exhorting us to mend all those little faults which none but those who are not rowing themselves can appreciate.

It was after four on one of the half-holidays that the race took place. Such a scramble commenced at the raft as we all got up there ! Every one shouting for his boat, and rushing all over the place to find it ; then solemn charges to the waterman not to let it go out on any account until the owner came down from changing ; and then again, after this was completed, another tumult of voices, which could only be appeased by the actual launch of the tubs, and the dismissal both of them and of their owners. It was not that there were so many of our own fellows going to start, for there were really only twelve pairs, but there was another shorter sweepstakes which was to come off directly after our own, and which was to row up to the sand bank, while we went as far as Rushes ; and there were also the numberless parties who were all taking advantage of the length of the afternoon, and hurrying up to Monkey, so that on the whole the rafts were decidedly more crowded than on any ordinary occasions.

"Well, we're off at last," said Vesey, as we got under weigh, and made for the Brocas Clump, which was our starting-point.

"We ought to have got off long ago," I remarked.
"All the other fellows are in front of us."

"Well then, they must make way as we come up. But with only four in a row, it won't be difficult to pass them."

"There's Trevor just in front of us," said Vesey ; "he is not getting on very beautifully."

"I should think not," put in Walters, anxious to show his own superiority over the other bow. "I wonder if he has taught that fellow to keep stroke yet."

They were in the last row, whereas we were in the second ; but we never caught them up, but let them go on ahead to the starting-place. Each row had four boats in it, and as there were three of them, they took in the twelve pairs. In the first was Sutton, whom I had always thought would be the winner ; and in the second were Rogers and myself, with two other boats, who neither of them had very much chance of doing anything. Trevor, with others, made up the last one, and as we settled into our places, I could hardly help laughing at the look of sullen discontent which was evidently caused by the combination of a bad position and a bad bow.

"Come up a little, Windsor number one," shouted our starter ; and the boat near the Windsor side accordingly drew up a little.

"That's it. Now then, two Eton back a little, and one Windsor also, you are a little too forward now. That will do."

In this way the boats were gradually got into their proper positions ; and when the bows of those in each row seemed to be tolerably level, all of us prepared for the start, and sat with our arms straight out in front of us, and the oars ready to descend at the first moment into the water.

“Are you ready ?” asked the voice from the shore. No answer ; and in another moment the pistol went off. Every oar splashed in the water, and the shouts began both from the bank and from the steerers.

“Well rowed !” shouted Vesey, imitating the rest by encouraging his crew. “Now then, put it on !”

“Don’t let them foul you,” I said, “and then perhaps we shall do. Look out for those two boats ahead.”

A glance behind had shown me that Rogers had got off tolerably clearly, and was making his way up stream as fast as he could. But two of the others, who had been in the same row with him, seemed by no means inclined to leave the passage entirely free for the rest of us. One of them indeed, the instant the pistol was fired, had commenced turning sharp round instead of thinking of the race, and had deliberately run into its neighbour, with the avowed object of creating a confusion and of spoiling as many chances as possible.

“I say, Vesey,” shouted Walters, “you must give those fellows a wide berth, or they’ll take off our steerage for us.”

“All right ; they’re too much occupied with themselves though.”

The bow of one boat had bumped the other just at the stern, and the fellow rowing at that end had jumped up and seized hold of the steerage, so as almost

to be towed along by his enemy. In this position they had floated right across stream ; and two boats' lengths thus joined together took up a pretty good portion of the river. Vesey, however, brought us round them, but it was impossible to avoid a collision with those behind as well as with those in front. It was not Trevor that came upon us, for he was fully occupied in the rear ; but it was one of the boats of his row which came right up alongside of us, and made their oars clash with ours in a most unpleasant manner.

"Steer off, will you !" I cried. "Don't come fouling us in that way." But it was not much use, they paid no attention to us ; and so in revenge for the insult, the blade of an oar passed under their steerage strings, and we quickly deprived them of what they had known so little how to use.

"Row on now," said I, "let's do our best."

Shouts came to us also from the bank, and we were stimulated to get clear of the multitudes if possible. The spectators on land were a miscellaneous mass ; many were from all sorts of different houses, come to look at us for the fun of the thing ; and some were belonging to our own dame's, and consisted of those who had not passed, and of one or two individuals who had paid their half-crowns to escape starting.

"That's right," I said, as we drew ahead ; "now then, let's go on."

"We shall never catch up those fellows in front," said Walters. "There's Rogers a fearful way in advance, and Sutton is leaving us behind at each stroke."

"Oh, never mind, row on, all ; there are only those two and Price before us."

We left the splashings and bumpings to go on by themselves, and toiled up as well as we could to Lower Hope.

"We don't gain on those fellows ahead one bit," said Walters.

"How do you know?" asked Vesey, wishing to check his despondency. "You ought to keep your eyes on the boat."

"I'll tell you what, I can see though, without turning round; there are a lot of these fellows coming on behind us."

"Oh, confound them and you too," I said, for I got quite impatient. "Let's row on as hard as we can."

"Well," he continued, "I vote we foul some of these first fellows as they come down. We shall meet them just below Rushes."

A house sweepstakes had none of that formality about it which prevented the smallest utterance while the race was going on. Everybody talked in the same way as we were doing; and the river and the bank mingled their voices in such a way as to create quite a Babel of sounds. As the boats, however, gradually separated from each other, and the distances between each were increased, the noise lessened; and after rounding Lower Hope a comparative silence seemed to reign. We worked on, steadily now, for I had made up my mind to do my best, and Walters was kept up by the hope of fouling one or more of the first boats as we met them coming down on our way to Rushes. Upper Hope was soon passed; the strong stream at the corner delayed us a little, but we fought our way against it, and Athens in its turn was reached.

"How far are they ahead?" asked Walters.

"Rogers is just behind Rushes now," answered Vesey, "and Sutton is about twenty yards behind him."

"Then we're gaining a little, ain't we?" said I.

"A little perhaps, not much. We can't overtake them."

"What do you say, Norton, to fouling them?" asked my bow.

"Oh, that's awful nonsense," I answered.

"Well, but we might win ourselves if we shut them up."

"But we shan't."

"Well, let's try; shall we?"

"If they come very near, not otherwise."

As we got close to Rushes the first boat was coming away from it. We ought properly to have kept to our own side of the stream, and to have taken no notice of it, but Vesey I suppose was anxious for a little skirmish, and before I knew of it we were close together. Walters of course had been looking out, and as they passed us tried the old trick of taking off the steerage. He seized his oar out of the rowlock and made a dash at the receding stern. If the result of his attempt was not what he expected, I must say he fully deserved it, and I almost began to laugh when I saw how his plans of aggression had failed. He never touched his enemy at all, his eye probably had miscalculated the distance; but his oar, which he had raised in his hand, and which was naturally heavy, had gone forward with so much impetus as to fly out of his hand altogether. He had not thought of holding it firmer than usual, and the consequence was that in an instant it was floating down stream beyond our reach.

"Well, we shan't win now, at all events," I remarked.

"I'm awfully sorry," said Walters; "I had no idea it would go out of my hand like that."

"Of course you hadn't," said Vesey, "but it's done now. What are we to do?"

"Why, paddle into the bank as best we can, and then I shall run down and see the finish."

We could manage that much easily enough, and having made our boat fast just above Athens, ran down and cut across by Cuckoo Weir, so as to catch up the first boats. There was no great disappointment in not being able to continue our struggle, for it was impossible that we should have come in either first or second; so our accident had no very distressing effect on me. Walters was the most annoyed, because it had been his fault; but even he had recovered his spirits by the time we reached the railway bridge, and was ready to laugh at it as much as any of those who came to question us.

Our boats made their appearance almost immediately after we had reached the bank, much in the same order as when we had last seen them. Rogers was still first, but Sutton was rapidly gaining upon him; and I felt almost sure that my predictions would be verified as to the lasting powers of the second boat.

"How frightfully done Parkinson looks," said Vesey, as they came up to where we were.

"He is not doing a scrap of work," was my own remark; "but I knew he was no good for such a distance."

"Come on, let's run a bit," proposed our steerer.

"Oh, walking will do just as well," said Walters; "they don't go so fast as all that. Well rowed, Sutton!" he shouted, as the latter came on towards us.

"Well rowed!" we cried all of us, for a most plucky spurt was put on which seemed to threaten to catch up their adversaries.

"I don't think they'll do it, after all," said Walters, as Brocas Clump was reached, and still Rogers kept ahead,

"It will be a most wonderful thing if they don't. Parkinson is quite done."

"Yes, but don't you see he keeps time still, so he doesn't throw Rogers out."

Both boats were getting very near the rails; the second boat still gaining a little, but only enough to make it exciting, not to show a certainty of winning. Rogers evidently was straining every nerve, and even his bow seemed to be recovering a little life as they passed Tolladay's raft.

"That will save them," said Walters. "Parkinson has recovered a little after his easy."

And so it did; there was a hard struggle towards the end, but no doubt as to what was the eventual result. Rogers passed under the bridge a winner by a couple of lengths, and was hailed at my dame's that evening by a sort of miniature ovation in the passage as he came out from supper.

CHAPTER XIII.

OPPIDAN DINNER.

" So we went in and dyned. When dynner was done, we came into the same place again, and sate us downe upon the same benche, commanding oure seruautes that no man should trouble us."—*Utopia.*

ONE of the good old customs, which has since been done away, was that at the end of every summer a dinner should take place, to which all the chief Oppidan were to be invited. From its character this was always known in the school as Oppidan Dinner, and it was considered a great privilege to be one of those who attended it, since only Upper Boats, the Eleven, and Sixth Form were requested to be present. The Saturday before Collections was the day fixed for it, and immediately after church was over we all proceeded up town to the White Hart, where the dinner was to take place. Everybody of course was in the best of humours, pleased with themselves and with their neighbours, as well as with the prospect that was before them ; and the various groups therefore that were to be seen crossing the bridge, and ascending the castle hill, were all gay and animated, intent upon the pleasurable feast that was to come.

It may be doubted whether such a gathering really

did very much harm. The authorities seem to have thought so, otherwise they would hardly have put a stop to it. But then there was also a certain amount of good in it ; there was the sociability of the thing ; the meeting together of friends who were perhaps at the end of their school life, and would never sit at the same table again ; there was, in fact, the cultivation of all those human kindnesses which, as Dr. Johnson once observed, form so large a part of man's duty. It is true that the general tone of such assemblies might be somewhat free, and that boys might indulge too unrestrainedly both in their conversation and in their wine, and sometimes certainly there were disgraceful examples ; but if the boys could have managed themselves to put a check upon this, from their own feeling of good breeding, the dinner, and even the dessert afterwards, might have been worthy of perpetuation.

When we got up to the hotel they were scarcely ready for us, and so we were turned into one of the smaller rooms to wait till the table was laid. The Captain of the Boats had of course himself to go personally and ascertain that all was correctly done ; for to him was entrusted the whole management of everything, and he it was who formally asked all the company to be present. Meanwhile the rest of us remained in idleness, waiting till the moment should arrive for our move into the great room.

At last the announcement came that dinner was on the table, and all of us proceeded with great alacrity to take our places for the feast. The room where it had been prepared was a long one, which stretched right through the house, from the front, which looked on to the castle,

to the back, where a window gave us a glimpse of the stables. It had in all probability been originally two rooms which were now thrown into one, and so formed a convenient place for visitors on the 4th of June, as well as for any great occasion like the present. A long table stretched down the whole length, and at this all of us were seated, without any particular order being observed, except that the Captain of the Boats was at the head of it.

On one side of me was Parsons, and on the other Green, both belonging to the Prince of Wales, but neither of them very particular friends of mine, though of course I was in some measure acquainted with them. That however did not matter much, for at a dinner like the one we were now beginning, one was not driven to rest entirely on one's neighbours for any amusement which might be forthcoming. All of us were far more interested in the general proceedings of the table than in any particular conversations which two or three of us might enter upon.

“What soup is this?” asked one of them, as the waiter brought us round our first instalment.

“Mock turtle, I believe.”

The question and answer, simple as they were, served to form a commencement for a sort of desultory conversation which took place between us during the rest of the dinner. A good portion of the time we were occupied with our food, or with the sayings and doings of others at some little distance from us, but the interchange of words, if not of thought, took place between us with a frequency that was quite sufficient to make us agreeable to each other.

“It’s not a bad dinner, is it?” said Green, after the salmon had been removed, and the covers of the other dishes had been taken off to show their contents.

“Not at all,” I answered; “two sorts of soup, two of fish, and all these sort of things on the side.”

“Well, it ought to be, you know, considering the price we pay for it.”

“I think eighteen shillings is rather too much,” said Parsons. “If you count, there are nearly fifty of us; and they really ought to be able to give a dinner for so many at very much less.”

“But then you know that includes all the wine.”

“So it ought to do. Why, how much wine do you suppose we drink?”

“Well, I believe they calculate it at a bottle a head.”

“Suppose then,” he continued, “they collect forty-five pounds. Then say fifteen of it goes for the wine, and then there is thirty left for the dinner. That’s too much.”

“Oh, I don’t know; there are all the extra waiters to be paid—Snip and all the rest of them.”

Many of the College hangers-on were always pressed into the service of this night; and as all expected some little remuneration, and few of us would have grudged it to them, it may really be doubtful whether the charge was very much more than it ought to be. At any rate it was not a pleasant subject for discussion at the dinner itself, and we soon banished such disturbing reflections from our minds.

The first half of the entertainment passed off quietly enough. The champagne, after it had been brought on to the table, loosened our tongues a little, and gave a livelier and rather more noisy flow to the conversation;

but the same effect may almost always be observed, in a greater or less degree, at every table in the kingdom, and there was not the slightest symptom of anything like excess.

"How comfortable one feels," said Green, "after a good dinner!"

"Yes, especially when one has had one's glass of champagne with it ;" and I laughed as I spoke, for Green had been uncommonly fond of the bottle.

"Yes," he said, quite gravely ; "it puts one in good humour with everybody."

"The worst of it is, you know, that infernal absence," said Parsons.

"What a bore it is," I said, "having to walk down to College, and then come up here again."

"Isn't it ? But I wouldn't miss the after part for something."

"What o'clock is it now ?" said some one opposite.

"Quarter past five," was the answer, so there was still plenty of time for the enjoyment of our cheese, as well as for our walk down to College. It was fortunate that absence thus came almost half way between four o'clock and lock-up. There was a comfortable time for our dinner before it, and then there was also time afterwards for the speeches and songs which had to follow. But it certainly was a great bore having to leave our seats and walk nearly a mile, for the sake of simply answering "Here, sir," when our names were called.

When everybody seemed to have finished, the signal was given from the top of the table, and all rose to go. Arm-in-arm we came down town, a merry party, and eagerly watched by all those who were not fortunate

enough to be invited. It still wanted a quarter to six when we reached the school-yard, but it was hardly worth going to any of our houses, so we loitered about till the Doctor made his appearance. Darrell, Pryor, and Trevor were of course all of them with us, though I had not seen very much of them at the dinner, from their being at the far end of the table. Now however that we could mix with each other, all of us had a word to say, or some thought to give vent to as to the proceedings of the day.

"Whom did you get next to?" I asked, as Darrell came up to me.

"Why, Trevor and I were together; why didn't you come with us?"

"Because I didn't see you; but I did very well where I was."

"That's uncommonly rude. You know you would have done better with us."

"Well," I answered, "we'll get together afterwards."

I waited for them till their names had been called at absence, and then we started off again to finish our interrupted sitting. We could hardly make so good a procession as before, since we all answered at different times, and the early ones never cared to wait for the rest. But all eventually reached the top of the hill, and before half-past six we were settled down again in our places.

The table had been prepared for us, and there was some show of dessert, but it was evidently expected that we should drink more than we should eat. Decanters and glasses made the chief show; and the last of these I noticed were none of them of those delicate shapes which are the symptoms at once of fragility and of high price.

Breakages were expected, and it had been ruled, therefore, that it was no use exposing what would run up a heavy bill at the end.

"These are substantial, ain't they?" said Darrell as we sat down. "None of your thin stems here."

"There won't be much broken," I remarked.

"There will be at the end," he answered. "You'll see."

"What's the first thing that comes off?" asked Trevor, for we had all three got together.

"Why, the first thing," replied Darrell, "is that the wine is passed round, and we all fill our glasses."

"Of course it is; we've done that already."

"Well, now you see the second thing just beginning at present. Drummond is just going to stand up; so listen, and you'll hear."

The Captain of the Boats rose from his seat at the top of the table, and after knocking with the handle of his knife upon the table, as a sign to enforce silence, he proposed the first toast. No public dinner of any sort could pass, as he observed, without the health of royalty being drunk, and least of all could it be omitted among a company of Etonians, and under the very shadow of Windsor Castle. He should therefore, without further remark, give "The Queen."

We all stood up, and drank it with an accompaniment of cheers. "The Prince of Wales and the rest of the royal family," followed; and then after the tribute of our loyalty had thus been paid, we waited eagerly for the toasts which had more immediate reference to our own particular interests.

"The next toast I have to propose," said Drummond, "is one which I am sure we shall all receive with the

greatest pleasure. People have told us that we were going down in the world ; that our reputation in the ordinary school sports and exercises was lowered ; and, above all, that our efficiency in the cricket field had sunk almost to nothing. Well, I will acknowledge that there



might be some cause for discontent, if we looked merely at the performances of the last two or three years ; but within the last month we have played another match, and I am sure no one will say that we came out of it discreditably. Our eleven succeeded in getting an

enormous score the second innings, and I feel confident that had there been time to finish it, we should have seen the last two wickets of our opponents fall before they could get the twenty and odd runs. This, of course, is a great triumph, more especially as it comes after a run of ill luck which has caused us to be in a certain way spoken against ; and though I am not a 'dry bob,' and cannot therefore be expected to know very much about the game, still it is impossible for me to help thinking that our success has been in a great measure owing to the able management of our captain, Mr. Linwood. We all know how indefatigable he is in Upper Club, and what an example he sets to all those who propose to devote themselves to cricket. He is always at it himself, and always striving to bring out new talent, as well as to develop the powers of his eleven. Under these circumstances, as I said before, we cannot but acknowledge our obligations to him ; and therefore I call upon you to drink, with the usual honours, the toast of 'The eleven, coupled with the name of Mr. Linwood.' "

The speech had often been interrupted by cheers which had testified the approval of the audience ; but when Drummond ceased a perfect storm arose, which required his utmost efforts to compose, and then was only stilled by the prospect of the chorus which was to precede the actual drinking of the toast. Every one was eager to record his own belief in the joviality and excellence of those to whom he was about to drink, and also to maintain his own positive conviction as to the impossibility of any one denying such an assertion. The musical honours therefore were given most heartily, and

it was with an incipient feeling of hoarseness that many of us sat down after they were over.

“That’s rather good, isn’t it, his saying we should have won?” I observed to Trevor, as comparative silence was restored.

“So we might,” he answered. “It’s not probable, but on a night like this one may say anything.”

“Now then for a song, I suppose;” and just as I spoke the voice came from the top of the table, “May I call upon Mr. Murray for a song?”

The gentleman in question was an Irishman, and without any hesitation at once favoured us with one of the comic ballads of his country. It was certainly an amusing one, and elicited roars of laughter, which were excited not merely by the words, but by all the faces and intonations which accompanied them. If his voice was not very good, the deficiency was amply made up for by his countenance; and when the song ceased, the applause which followed was universal.

“That’s just the sort of song, you know, for a dinner like this,” said Darrell; “it’s worth a hundred of some of those frightfully vulgar things.”

“Yes,” I answered. “But half the fellows here consider vulgarity the same as wit.”

“More fools they, that’s all. Do you think they will ask you to sing?”

“I am sure I hope not,” was my answer. “I shan’t if they do; I haven’t got a bit of voice.”

“Nor have I,” he said. “But there’s Trevor,” he added, speaking louder.

“What’s that you are saying about me, Darrell?”

“We were saying you would be asked to sing.”

"Oh, no."

"Will you if they do?"

"Perhaps."

"Then I hope they will."

Linwood was not long in standing up to return thanks for the eleven as well as for himself. It was true they had done their best, he said, for no one liked being beaten; all he could say was that he wished they had done a little more. They had prevented a defeat, but the eight had been more fortunate, and had secured a victory. He then went on with a sort of panegyric on the river performances, which was sure to captivate the ears of boys who hardly cared whether it was sense or nonsense, truth or falsehood, which they heard, so long as their own praises were sounded before them. The end of the speech was of course a proposal to drink the health of the eight, coupled with the name of Mr. Drummond.

Cheers, as loud and as prolonged as any that were heard that night, followed. Everybody stood up, and paid their homage to the river gods of the school. But as all things come to an end, this eventually subsided also, and the pause came before a new songster was invoked.

In this way toasts and songs alternated, till the arrival of candles warned us that it was drawing towards lock-up. Trevor, amongst others, had favoured us with a specimen of his vocal powers, and many were the speakers who had been called upon to delight us with their eloquence. The captain of the football eleven, as well as the captain of the Oppidans, had both had their healths proposed, and had returned thanks, according to

the common saying, in neat and appropriate speeches. Then, too, there was the future Captain of the Boats, the one who was to succeed to the command next year ; and to him every good wish had been tendered, for which he had expressed himself duly grateful ; so that altogether our meeting had almost finished its task in the work of self-glorification, and little remained for us to do before taking our departure.

“What o’clock is it ?” I asked of my neighbour.

“Twenty minutes past eight. We shall have the last toast directly.”

“It will be a good thing for some fellows to get away,” I remarked.

“Do you think so ?” said Darrell. “There are not many fellows elated.”

“I don’t know. Look at Croker out there, he is rather uproarious.”

“Oh, everybody gets a little bit excited, without being drunk.”

“That’s true. I say, let’s stick together going down.”

“All right ; here’s the last.”

There was one toast which always closed every Eton assemblage. It was one which all agreed in honouring, and which was specially convenient as the last one, since no acknowledgment could be demanded for it. All knew, therefore, that when our president rose to propose it, it was a signal for breaking up.

Very few words were sufficient to introduce it, and then all of us drank with the most heartfelt sincerity to the toast of “*Floreat Etona.*” Our cheers preceded it, and when it was over the whole company, as one man, flung their glasses down, and they were dashed in pieces

on the table. It may have been nothing more than the wanton spirit of destruction which prompted such an action ; but there may also have been something deeper in it, something emblematic perhaps of the time when it occurred, the close of our last meeting, the close of the much-loved summer half, and the close also, for many of us, of our school lives.

There was not much sentiment, at all events, in the rush which followed to the door. A general scramble over tables and chairs took place, but at last we all met outside in the open street. Our march down town was made with all the gravity that could be summoned to our aid ; and the ceremonies of the day were brought to a conclusion by the hoisting of the present as well as of the future Captain of the Boats, as soon as we arrived in College.

CHAPTER XIV.

FAREWELL.

Farewell to thee, old building,
 That hast seen full many a race
 Before us, and shalt see yet more
 Rise up to fill our place.
 And fare ye well whose guidance
 Has made us what we are ;
 Has made us now regret the blow
 That bears us off afar.

Farewell to thee, fair river,
 Of our triumphs late the scene ;
 Farewell, ye fields, victorious
 Would that ye too had been !
 Farewell to our companions
 Who with us oft have played ;
 Farewell to all whoe'er can call
 Their nurse thine hallowed shade.

Eton " Vale."

EVERYTHING now reminded me of my approaching departure. I could hardly bear the thought of it, and looked forward with the deepest sorrow to the day when I should no longer be an Eton boy. The parting with one's friends was bad enough, but then there were also all the old associations of the last five or six years which were to be taken leave of. The house in which I had lived, the fields and river where I had played, the chapel and the old school itself were to know me no more ; and the parting with all of them seemed to be

more bitter than I could ever have imagined it. Boys from other schools have been glad to go ; boys from Eton never. And I fully believe it would be impossible to find one single instance of any individual who could say that he had not felt sorrow at quitting it. My own feeling was most intense, and a long time had to elapse before I recovered from it.

The leaving books which came in, all served to keep me in mind of the day that was to come. Many were those who were to receive them, and the demands upon parents' pockets became proportionately great. My own stock mounted up gradually, and the shelves of my bureau made a most creditable display for those who came to inspect them. But they all told me of what I tried to forget, and the contemplation of them thus became almost a mournful occupation.

The days drew on, and Election Saturday with its speeches and fireworks passed off as usual—a repetition entirely of what had taken place on the Fourth of June. Then came the Sunday, on the evening of which I was to take leave of the Doctor, and my name would be crossed out from the school list. The time appointed for those of his division, who were thus to say good-bye to him, was after eight o'clock absence. He then went into his chambers, and all of us waited outside till our turns came.

It was at this moment that I happened to catch sight of Darrell at a distance, so rushed after him to say that I should be off early in the morning, and might not see him again.

“ Well, good-bye,” he said, after a few moments’ conversation, and when I told him that I must go back to

my post. "I'm glad I've still got another year to look forward to."

"I'm sure I wish I had," was my answer. "But good-bye."

I was not very high up in Sixth Form, and every one of those above me were going to leave, so that there was some little time to wait. The Doctor's servant was in attendance outside to usher us all in, and as a sovereign to him was always one of the regular fees, I got over this portion of my business while I waited.

"Then you'll have your name cut, sir, on the door of the Doctor's room, and also in Upper School. Any particular place, sir?" he asked.

"No," I said; "I have no choice where it is, provided I can see it somewhere."

"Very good, sir; then I'll pick out the best place for it that I can find."

It was the privilege of Sixth Form to pay extra on leaving, and the servant reaped the same advantage from us as his master. In his case, however, there was double work, for our names were cut in two places, instead of merely in Upper School as was the case with Fifth Form. The Doctor, however, had no such excuse, nevertheless we scarcely grumbled at the extra five pounds, for we had all liked him while we were up to him.

"How did you give him the envelope?" I asked, as the fellow next but one before me came out.

"I held it under my hat," he answered. "Everybody told me that was the way; and then when I moved my hat to go I left the note on the table."

"It's an awkward thing though," I remarked, "it's a horribly mean way of doing it."

"Yes ; but it's the custom."

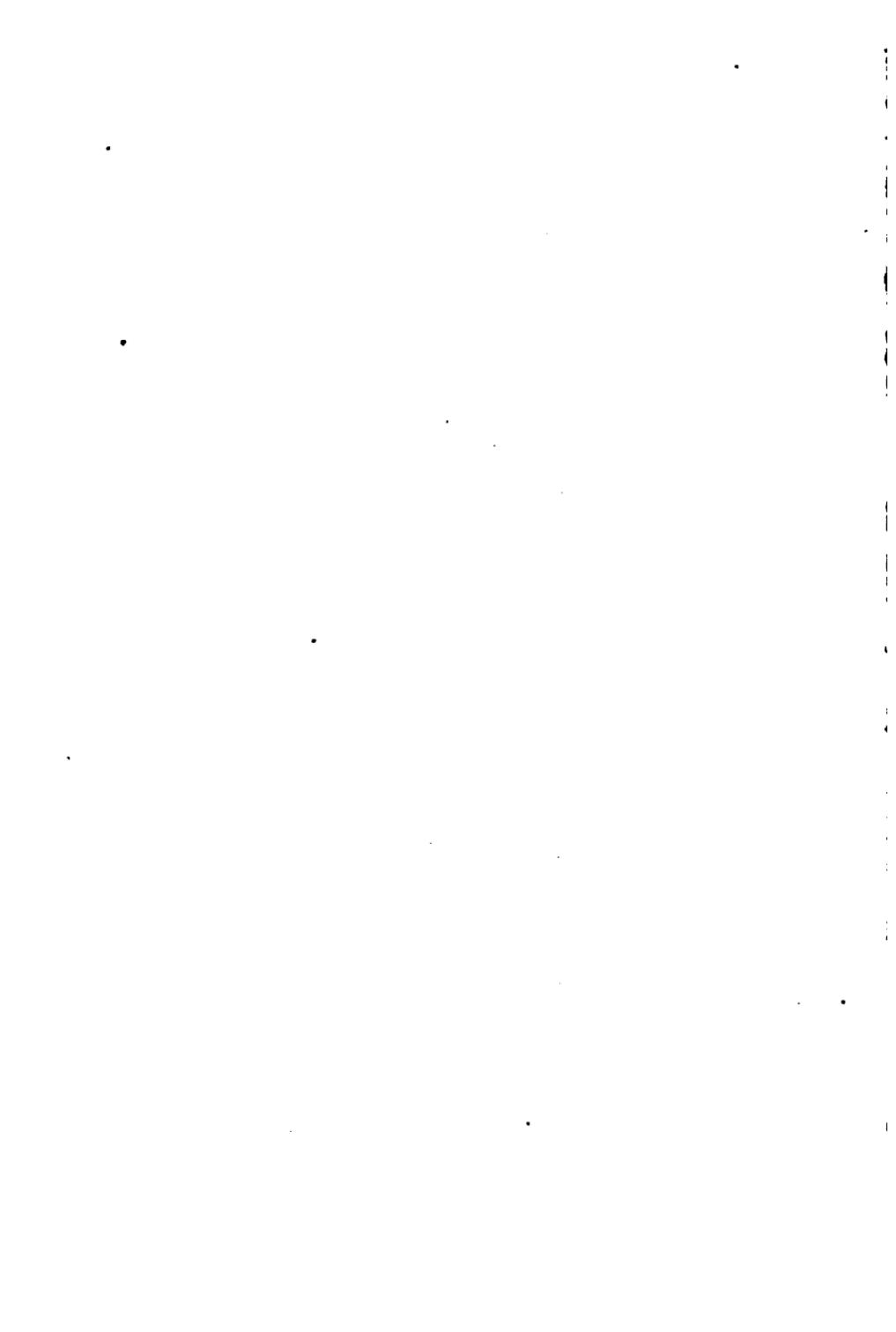
When my own turn came I walked in, holding the envelope between my hand and the lining of my hat. The Doctor was sitting at his table, and a chair was near him, which he invited me to occupy. A few minutes of conversation followed, during which I could not help thinking how hard it must be for him to find something to say to every one of those who thus came to take leave. But others were waiting, so the interview was short. As I rose to go, my hat rested for a moment on the table ; the note was dropped, almost by stealth as it seemed ; and then after shaking hands with him we parted.

It was impossible to go through the same farce with my tutor. I had known him too long, and had too much respect for him. When I went into his study therefore, immediately afterwards, I at once placed the note on the table without any attempt at concealment, and then sat down for my last visit.

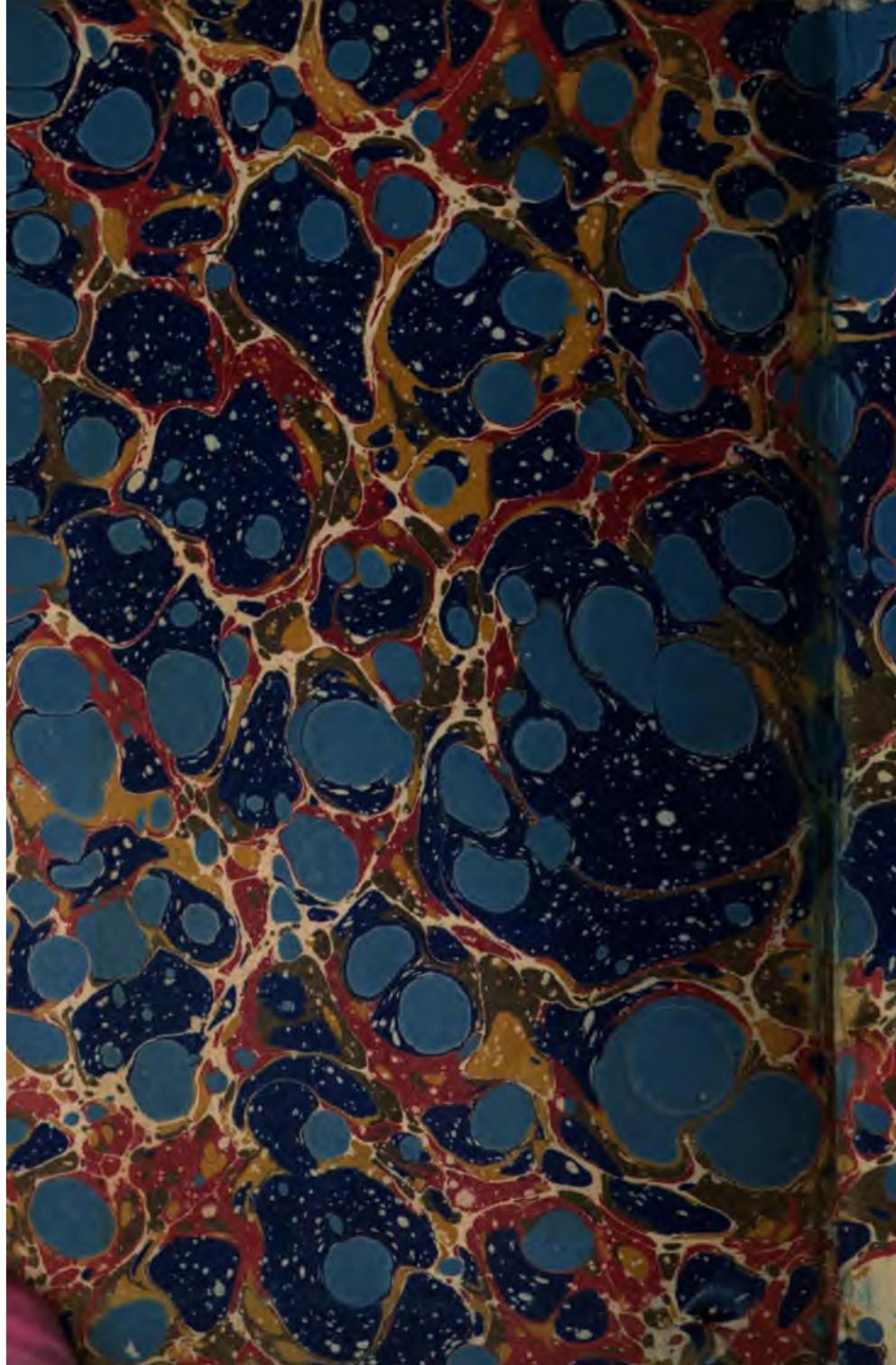
I was really very sorry to say good-bye to Mr. Turner. We had always got on remarkably well together ; I had liked him, and he certainly had shown every kindness to me. Now, however, we were to part ; and as I sat there, talking over Eton and the prospects beyond, I could not help feeling that I was saying good-bye to a real friend.

That night, when I went back to my dame's, I was no longer an Eton boy. All my friends in the house, Pryor, Trevor, and the rest, were taken leave of ; Mr. Argles gave me every good wish, and the next morning I was off on my way home.

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